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THE DISSOLUTION.

A PROJECTED DRAMA.

BY

RITTER DANDELYON.

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PREFACE.

Historical! bah friends,—'tis like the bleating of the flocks which battened on the hills of Illium; nor is the shield of Achilles found.

Utopia! they cry—and in the mad ensuing whirl of crazed men's minds, Earth's dweller might at length, with no little propriety be styled, "the son of the sleepless."

Utopia! Utopia! from all sides reëchoes, till the onward rolling tidal-wave of revolution seems on the very point of engulfing this, our present civilization, at no distant period in the near future.

Again Utopia resounds! The *honest* hearts of men at last grow faint and quail, while

'neath the incessant and ever increasing proddings, "a posteriori"—the cry of hold! peace! is even heard from amongst those who scoffed at visionary phantoms, and turned to jest the argument of dreamers—and many that once swore by their *honors* now foreswear themselves by the beards which they have not.

Even the shrill voices of piping old women have joined in the general discord—and we hear of shaking of heads and much talk of knowing what we know, which recalls again to mind the dull, though ominous thud of the "guillotine"—the "guillotine" which put such a sudden check upon the heedless drift of swaggering humanity—and taught the civilized world that, although there might be acknowledged grounds for doubt, there was also an indisputable lack and hitherto neglected need of exercise of the intellectual powers; an immediate cause for meditation upon something more serious than mere speculation.

Retracing the inadequate records of the history of civilization, from the earliest ages of the past down to the present, in her different periods of advance and decline,—one finds almost without exception that, in spite of the fanatical and visionary creations of apparently unsound minds, their owners, the much despised and ridiculed individuals, have been almost without exception, but the forerunners of the greatest revolutionary movements.

Never before in the history of modern civilization, nor in the past, as far as is known to our minds, has the great question of "equality of man's being," so forcibly stared the world in the face, as at present.

The question of universal tolerance and rights of man, now knocks loudly at the portals of humanity—shaking the very foundations of our social life, and which, if for any length of time is permitted to pass unanswered, threatens not only to completely check the advance and progress of civiliza-

tion, but wholly destroy the world's present culture.

The decline of civilization is usually slow. That of the "Roman Empire," for example, which extended over the astonishing period of five centuries of time.

Uncivilized nations excepted, whose actions and motives are prompted more by a natural instinct than judgment,—we can deliberately assert that, never in the world's history of culture, relatively speaking, and from an ethical point of view, has civilization reached such a state of decline. An age devoid of æstheticism as the desert of its streams and meads.

By æsthetics, we mean not the foppery of the doublet and hose of the ages of feudalism, but the grandeur and simplicity of the heroic.

An age in which the slightest attempt on the part of the individual to free himself from the sameness of this prosaic existence, is but welcomed by scoffs and jeers of derision.

The so-called notions of "laisser faire" predominating in the mind of man, our blasé youth now droop beneath the bane and weight of existence, having long since exhausted the joys and pleasures which life has to offer; while the extreme complacency with which we have reconciled ourselves to our present lot would baffle the wit of gods.

As the world cannot remain at a standstill, there are but two alternatives left to man—he must either advance or decline. If the latter, then the sooner man frees himself of the no longer endurable state of this age of conventionality, in which his very being has become a mockery, the better.

Return then to barbarity, and substitute the right of sword law for the might of gold, 'neath which latter we cunningly and basely outwit our slow thinking fellow, leaving him but the alternatives of death through starvation, or a lingering existence of toil, devoid of all happiness.

Upon second reflection, the former method

of man meeting man face to face, relying upon individual prowess, is the far nobler of the two, of indiscriminately gaining possession of, and hoarding world's riches, regardless of one's neighbor.

With his present knowledge of the world's history, however,—the rise and fall of nations, the advance and decline of culture, man will have himself alone to blame if he fails to work out his own salvation here on earth.

May the fates of past nations forever be a warning that, through foresight, he may prevent similar occurrences in the future. We not unfrequently meet with those of the "far off gaze" who sigh for the past; but the gods forbid! that we retrace our steps—for even were our present culture and cultivation of mind of a sufficient degree to permit of our entering upon a similar form of social life as that of the Greeks, whom we have to thank for most advantages of this, our present civilization, its duration would continue no greater period of time than formerly.

If, on the other hand, however, we accept the socialistic view—that the "golden age" has not yet been, but is still to come, with the experiences and advantages derived from the misfortunes of past nations, and a careful guarding of our own actions and motives, civilization may yet attain to a degree of perfection far surpassing that of the "Hellenic Races."

In spite of the many excellent suggestions and theories of reformers, respecting a purely socialistic form of government, all still are but lame affairs; and naturally one hears the universal complaint throughout the world that such theories fall far short of anything like plausibility—that after leading us up to a certain point, we are suddenly and without warning, dropped.

We wish to remind all those with no better argument to advance, that should we, by adopting their theories, attain to the degree of perfection set forth in them, we shall have no difficulty in advancing still farther—and,

moreover, we also call attention to the fact that no single mind, nor even generations of thinkers have solved Life's most difficult problems.

The advance of civilization progresses so slowly that the promotion thereof is only attainable through a fearful sacrifice of human life. The relation of the sexes here set forth in these pages is no more possible to-day in the present stage of our culture, than is the adoption of a purely socialistic form of government; to which latter, however, civilization is making rapid strides, and which the whole world must, undoubtedly, in time accept.

As an initiatory step, preparatory to entering upon such government, we would suggest the necessity of compulsory education—for like the ridiculous spectacle the honor of nations in foreign diplomacy has ever cut, so is the utter absurdity of the idea, that one fourth of a nation, the educated, should for

any length of time hope to govern the other ignorant three fourths.

Although such a condition of society in which both parent and child are provided for by the state, is impossible to-day, nevertheless, the gradual and universal establishment by law of platonic unions, or unions of friendship between man and woman—unions which will remain such, unless with the consent of the woman alone, they become intimate, is not impossible, and is the only practicable, though not immediate remedy for the saddest of human failings.

From such unions, only natural and legitimate children must spring in time.

We also wish to add, that we decline any distinction whatsoever of appearing to pose here as champion of woman, or any such "catamount of moon-shine"—the question under discussion being not that of falsetto sighings to the accompaniment of midnight strummings, but purely one of evolution —the refinement of the race through selec-

tion—that the present generation of mankind is ever responsible for each succeeding one.

Whither leadeth and what is the destiny of man? Alas! we are but mortal! Both the arguments for and against the belief in a Supreme Being and the soul's future existence are equally vain.

The advance of the different branches of science, however, has at last led to the theory of evolution, revealing again to man the once known, though alas! long forgotten fact that, all life is one and the same. The theory of evolution which at last has lent to man the hope of the immortality of the soul—a hope far more lasting than the hitherto belief founded upon mere longing and supposition.

Although the belief in the ethical teachings of Christ is perhaps not the direct admission of the existence of some Supreme Being, of whom we know nothing, and which does not concern us here at all, in that man from both a physiological and psychological point of view has his own salvation to work out

here on earth—nevertheless has science, through evolution, lent an invisible stay to Christianity, upon which the doctrines of Christ may be based.

Well may man point with pride to his most precious treasure Earth, the possession of which he has gained through his own might alone—and although according to the theory of evolution man has perhaps physically ceased to develop, nevertheless, viewing the mortal destiny of the world from a standpoint lying without the incomprehensible limits of time and space, we are not irrational in assuming that man's being will psychically continue to develop.

We believe in the soul's future existence, and the possibility of the regeneration of mankind.

Paradoxical as much of this may sound and appear, it is nevertheless, only experience derived of hypothesis based upon physiological and psychological fact, which best rends

aside the mists that veil the hidden mysteries of knowledge.

Take not too much literally. The letter has ever been the stumbling-block of humanity. Only the figurative lends impulse to the human intellect, impelling it to its loftiest flights of imagination.

Ideality is perfection—all that falls short of it is but crude and transitory ; while just as love, not filial affection, without romance, is inconceivable, so socialism and romance go hand in hand,—and all those who in grappling with the great question fall short of ideality, have to do with less than the shadow of a phantom. R. D.

Dresden, Germany.—1893.

" Ist es vernünftig anzunelmen, dass der gewisse Untergang unsers Erdkörpers nur eine Frage der Zeit sei, so werden wir uns anch daran gewöhnen müssen, das menschliche Geschlecht einmal aussterben zu wissen. Dagegen darf es sich aber um eine

ausser aller Zeit, und allem Raum leigende Bestimmung handeln, und sie Frage, ob die Welt eine moralische Bedeutung habe, wollen wir hier damit zu beantwoten versuchen, dass wir uns selbst zunächst befragen, ob wir viehisch oder göttlich zu Grunde gehen wollen."

RICHARD WAGNER.

"Heldenthum und Christenthum."

EXPLANATIONS.

King Gylfi ruled o'er the land now known as Swithiod (Sweden). King Gylfi was wise and much versed in magic. He wondered much at the wisdom of the Gods; that all things submitted to their will. "Did this arise from their own individual power, or does the might which they possess, originate from that which in reality is sacrificed to their own ends?"

Assuming the form and disguise of an old man, he journeyed to "Asgard."

The Gods, however, aware of his approach, plan a deception with which to receive him.

Arriving at Asgard he perceived a burg, the lofty halls of which were covered with golden shields, resembling shingles.

At the entrance of the halls, Gylfi beheld a man playing with knives, tossing seven in the air at a time.

"What is thy name?" demanded the stranger.

"Gangleri," answered Gylfi. "Untrodden are the ways by which I come—weary am I, and thy hospitality I beg for the night. But to whom belong the halls?"

"To the king," answered the stranger. "I will conduct thee to him."

Entering the halls, Gangleri beheld many apartments and throngs of people, some feasting and making merry, whilst others were engaged in the exercise of arms, and much of that which he beheld seemed marvelous.

He perceived three thrones, one above the other, upon each of which reclined a man.

"By what names are these chiefs known?" he asked,

"Har, Jafnhar and Tridï, they are called," replied the stranger.

"Meat and drink are at thy disposal—refresh thyself," said Har, addressing Gangleri.

"By what name art thou known, oh wanderer, and what is thy purpose in visiting the halls of Har?"

"Gangleri my name, and much desire I to know. Great is thy wisdom, oh Har—relate of the Gods, creation and universe, of the past and future."

"Much desirest thou to know, Gangleri, and many and strange things are related about that which thou enquirest," and continuing Har began:

"At first there was naught,—chaos and yawning abyss everywhere, yet 'All-Father' was and hath lived through all time."

"'All-Father' ruleth all things great and small, created the Heavens and Earth, the universe and all that breathes therein—and is Father of Gods, giants, men and dwarfs."

"Before the Earth were 'Niflheim,' out of

whose midst springeth the fount 'Hwergelmir' the source of rivers and 'Muspel,' the abode of flames." "'Surtr' guardeth the realms of 'Muspel,' and one day shall he and his armies, 'Muspel's' sons, (flames) conquer the Gods, and the whole World shalt perish in the flames." "And there were many other Worlds."

"'All-Father' created the Heavens and Earth, the sun and moon and stars—arranged the day and night, the winds, and seasons."

"Two wolves, 'Skoll and Hati,' the offspring of the giantess 'Hrodwitnirs,' pursue the sun and moon." "When 'Hati' overtaketh and devoureth the moon, the destruction of the World, or 'Ragnarök' shall come to pass."

"And when the Earth had swept into being, the giants dwelt among the mountains, the men upon the plains, and the dwarfs in the interior of the Earth." "Upon the cloud-heights dwelt the Gods."

"In the midst of Asgard, the Gods reared

a temple—within and without all is of gold, owing to which circumstance the times were known as the 'golden age.'"

"Within its halls the Gods often hold their tribunals, deciding the fates of the living."

"Since then the giants have reared a burg at the end of the Heavens, called 'Walhalla,' and from whose halls, 'All-Father' overlooketh the Worlds." "The rainbow, 'Bifröst' leads from 'Walhalla' to the Earth."

"'All-Father' incites the races of men to battle, and sends his maidens, the 'Walkyries,' who preside over battle, bearing the fallen heroes to 'Walhalla.'"

"And 'All-Father' and his gathered heroes in 'Walhalla' shall one day give battle to 'Surtr,' who cometh with his armies."

"The 'Walkyries' minister at the feasts of heroes in 'Walhalla.'"

"'Brunnhilde' is the most cherished of these maidens."

"There is also the 'World-Ash,' 'Yggdra-

sils,' the 'Tree of Existence.'" "Its site is the most cherished and sacred of the Gods, whilst 'neath its boughs, their tribunals are daily held." "This ash is the oldest and best of all trees." "Its branches shadow the whole Earth and it reaches unto Heaven."

"'Yggdrasils' hath three roots; from beneath one of which bursts forth the fount of 'Mirmir,' in which knowledge and wisdom lie concealed."

"'Mirmir' the dwarf, who guardeth the fount, is exceedingly wise, for he partaketh daily of its waters."

"The 'Nornas' or Fates, also dwell beneath the branches of 'Yggdrasils!'" "Each day they dip the water from out the spring of 'Mirmir,' with which they sprinkle the Ash." "The 'Nornas' also decide the fates of men."

"Once 'All-Father' demanded a draught from out of the fount, which however, he only received upon forfeiting one of his eyes."

"The ravens, 'Hugin and Munin,' are the messengers of 'All-Father'—'Sleipnir' his charger, the best of all steeds."

"'Heimdall' the watchman at the gates of 'Walhalla,' and 'Giallorhorn,' the horn which he bloweth." "'All-Father' is the Father of 'Asas' or Gods, and 'Frigga' his spouse."

"'Iduna,' spouse of 'All-Father's' son, 'Brage,' the God of scalds, guardeth the apples of immortality, of which the Gods partake to restore their youth."

"'Baldur,' the good or white and sun God, is the son of 'Frigga' and 'All-Father.'" "Once was Baldur tormented with terrible dreams, forboding his death, and communicating them unto the assembled Gods, they resolved to conjure all things to avert from him the threatened evil."

"Then exacted 'Frigga' an oath from fire and water, from iron and all metals, from earths, stones, beasts, birds, creeping things, poisons and diseases, that none of them would do harm to 'Baldur.'"

"But 'Frigga' had omitted to exact the oath from the mistletoe, thinking it too young." "But when it was known that nothing would harm 'Baldur,' it became the favorite pastime of the Gods to hurl their darts and weapons at 'Baldur,' for nothing could harm him, and this was regarded by all the Gods as a great honor shown unto 'Baldur.'"

"'Loke,' the God of Evil, ascertaining the fact that all things with the exception of the mistletoe, had taken oath not to harm 'Baldur,' provided himself with a twig of the plant, and hastened to the assembly of the Gods."

"There he found 'Höder,' the God of Darkness, standing apart from the others, without engaging in the sport."

"'Loke' approaching him saith: 'Why dost thou not also throw something at 'Baldur?'"

"'Because I am blind, and cannot see

where 'Baldur' is, and besides I have nothing to throw,' answered 'Höder.'"

"'Here hast thou wherewith to throw,' saith 'Loke,' thrusting the twig into his hand, —'Do like the rest and show honor unto Baldur.'"

"Then 'Höder' threw the mistletoe, and under the guidance of 'Loke's' arm, it pierced 'Baldur' who fell down lifeless."

"As 'Baldur' fell, the Gods were struck with horror, and gazed long and speechless at one another."

"At length they gave vent to such loud lamentations, that they were unable to express their grief through words."

"'All-Father' however, realized most keenly the great misfortune, for he knew that the death of 'Baldur' hastened the 'Dusk of the Gods,' or 'Ragnarök.'"

"'Nanna,' the spouse of 'Baldur,' Goddess of Innocence, died of a broken heart upon the death of 'Baldur,' and was burned with him upon the same pyre."

Then spake at length again Gangleri:

"What, oh 'Har,' is known of the 'Dusk of the Gods?' of which thou hast so often made mention—of this I have never yet heard."

'Har' answereth: "Concerning the 'Dusk of the Gods,' much is related." "First of all shall come a winter called 'Fimbulwinter,'—there shall be much snow and ice and fierce winds, and the sun shall lose his strength."

"During three successive years shall the Earth be visited by these winters and there shall be no summers."

"Previous to these winters however, shall come three other years, during which the Earth shall be harassed by wars."

"The hand of brother shall turn against brother, nor shall the son spare the father, or the father the son, and there shall be a great flood."

"The wolf shall at last devour the moon, and the sun shall lose its heat and light—the stars shall fall from the Heavens, and all

things shall cease to be, for 'Surtr,' the God of Fire, hath conquered."

Then spake again Gangleri:

"When all this shall have come to pass, do Gods still exist, and shall there be a Heaven and an Earth?"

'Har' replieth: "The Earth shall again emerge from the sea, green and beautiful, and grain shall wave upon her face, and the Gods and men shall spring again from the first life, which ever was before the beginning." "They shall assemble within 'Ida's' valley, which formerly was ancient 'Asgard,' and once again shall they find amongst the grass the golden disks, engraven with runes, which together they tossed of yore—so saith the 'Wöluspa.'"

And as 'Har' finished speaking, 'Gangleri' heard a great noise, and glancing about, he beheld that both hall and burg had disappeared, and that he was alone upon a great plain.

"Strange that once Gods and men were one," he saith. "And shall a time come when man ceaseth to believe in the Gods apart from self, yet still hath faith in the spirit, God in man, and 'All-Father' as one—for even now as of yore, they must be one and same,—and can his mean the 'Dusk of the Gods?'"

PRELUDE.

In the ages long since buried
'Neath the pond'rous lapse of time,
Swiftly flowed the eddying waters
Rolling onward towards the sea—
And beneath the floods lay treasures
Hidden by the gnomes and fairies,
Guarded by the magic ring ;—*
Whilst from out the vale's recesses
Faintly echoes, low increasing,
Till the ringing hills resounding,
Swiftly pour from glen and mountain
Countless warriors, dark, exulting,

* The "Nibelungen Hort" or treasure, also known as 'Rhinegold," buried in the depths of the Rhine, and guarded by the three Rhine daughters. Out of the "Nibelungen gold," stolen from the Rhine by the dwarf "Alberich," was welded the famous "Nibelung's Ring."

To the flowering fields below.
Slowly fading, ever sinking,
Dusky twilight enters eve,
Yet the bosséd shields' loud clanging
Hollow greets the slumbering dawn,
Till the stars re-appearing,
Faint from out the trodden grasses,
Damp, discolored drooping blossoms,
Endless sighings, slow ascending
Hoven 'neath the waning heavens.
Softly where the waters murmur,
Gliding 'neath the moon's pale rays,
High on lofty rock reclining,
Sparkling gleams her starréd brow.
"'Twas all for woman, all for woman,"
As she turning slowly mutters,
Like the whisperings of her tresses.*

* "Lilith" was the first woman. Within the mazes of her tresses lurked many voices, and exceedingly fair was Lilith. From Arabia and distant India, come rumors of "Lilith," yet she was known unto men by different names. Even unto the dim North the fame of Lilith was not unknown, and she was called the witch, and "Wala," and hath been likened unto "Erda, Spirit of Nature."

PROLOGUE.

Amidst the throngéd crowded halls,
All scarlet robed and golden
Linkéd girded 'bout, the minstrel
Held the silence of the host,
As from beneath the charméd spell
Of magic whispering breathing chords,
Arose the soulful strain of woman's
Blush, and bloom still faint
With loveliness, so like the sigh
Of passion's self, which lingering,
Languished on fair Minne's breast.
And ruddy glows the beaker's brim,
Swung beaded dripping high aloft,
And scarce had ceased to swell
And fall, the voice of sweet

Vibration's ravishment, than
Loudly rang the clanging shield
In echo to the warriors' shout.
And fiercely glowed dark "Etzel's" eyes,
"Great Etzel—'King of Nations'—"
And as he slowly roused himself,
Across faint vision's distant face,
Swept swift and mighty
    Rushing hosts.
Already wailings 'neath the heavens
Rise, like winds' low moanings
'Mongst the hills, and man of
World's creation greatest, still is
Least, for he doth prey upon
Himself, and stifling Nature's soulfelt voice
Of rarest virtue, essence
Breathing, innermost life and heritage
Of Earth, impelled of greed and 'lusive
Lust, to hideous envy's snares
    Succumbs.
Since from the heaving throes of space,
Earth lay bare to universe,
As 'twas at first, his nature

Never changing, ever same,
Man is but the jest and mockery
    Of man.
From shades he sprung, to death
Is born, and through existence,
Sombre course to gloomy nothingness
    Returns.
The soul's immortal! ha, ha!
The monarch laugheth loud.
Vain boast;—trust not conceit's
Deceptive voice, nor adulation's
Blandishments,—'tis deeds alone
Of greatest actions, sprung of soul's
Utmost longings tensified, which
Lead to never ceasing, time's defiance,
Immortal blooming, never ending,
    World suffering.
'Tis he alone that brightest shineth,
Who fearless, dazzling in his might,
Exulting strides destruction's brink,
And breathless awed, the present holding,
Leads to greet unknown future's great
Renown, the glories of the past.

Again the wild steed* shakes his mane,
And where the sharp hoof scorches earth.
Ne'er rears its head the blossom more,
Whilst Heaven high resounding echo
Countless clashings, waving,
Wailing, never ending—
And great is the flight of ravens.

* Owing to the devastations which marked the path of Attila's conquests, the saying became proverbial—"that wherever the hoof of his steed pressed the earth, the land became a waste."

THE DISSOLUTION.

I.

'Neath the gold lined leaf, in the grove of the oak, where the mistle buds on the bough, gathered the priests around the garland altars strewn with blossoms; and low rose the swelling chant in the forest's depths, while the white-robed maids joined in the chorus, and beat up the flame which leaped on the altars, deep carved with mystic runes.

She stands alone in the midst of the group. How fair thou art—like the flower of the meads, which tosses and blushes when clasped

by the winds, 'neath the smile of the heavens!

Green is the leaf bound in thy tresses, and fragrant the winding wreath of blossoms, yet pale is thy cheek as the buds which rest on the calm of thy brow.

"Farewell! oh world!" breathes the heaving sigh, and longing and fond is the lingering look,—"yet why, oh Gods! have ye lent to this Earth the heaven from which we must part!"

Long and silvery are the high priest's locks, adorned with the leaf of the oak, yet fearless she clasps the proffered hand, and together they stroll to the rune cut rock, where the licking flame glows yellow and red.

> "Faint and dark grows the
> Heart of man, and deep
> The gloom of the twilight—
> 'Wish-Father,' Wotan!
> We beseechingly kneel,
> Lone is lament of thy servant."

Subdued rang the voice of the mournful

harp, swept by the hand of the bards, and low and faint the chorus resounds—

> "'Wish-Father,' Wotan!
> We beseechingly kneel,
> Lone is lament of thy servant,—"

and scarce had the echoes died in the glade, than a soft low moan like the voice of the brook wavered aloft on the air. Cruel is the blade like the thought of man, and purple the jet which springs from the heart to the altar, where the lapping flame devours the drops, the life which the Gods demanded.

Crushed as the blossom 'neath the heedless foot of the passing stranger, she sank to earth, and lay in her loveliness. The awe of silence hangs o'er the place.

A youth steps forth from among the throng of bards; dark are his locks, and broad is his arm, and great the palor of his countenance. He halts and gazes on the fallen maid, then stooping, presses his lips to her brow, whilst yearning and tender hover

the looks ere the fading rays grew dim in her eye.

Slowly he rose, yet stood o'er the maid, and shrinking the priests meet the deepening gaze and gloom of the frown which swept through the throngs. Subdued and low as the desolate wail of the wind—like the mournful sigh of a departed spirit which haunts the lonely vale of the hills, is the yearn of the voiceful harp.

And fiercer and faster he snatched at the chords, till the echoing sound swept down on the breeze, and pale grew the priests as he sang:

"Gleaming the brink's verge
On the gloom—thither thy
Flight, oh Spirit! through
Endless space of eternal time
Away to wish-realms remoteness?
Of the flame that was,
Sunk a ray in the depths,
Deep swells the fount of the
Living, and Earth from
Abode of the fathomless shades
Swept into dawn, and
Fain dwelt the Gods

In the May of mellowing time.
Gone is the love that
Laughed in the heart,
Vain, oh soul! are thy longings—
And faint the gleam of
The glimmering disks*
'Neath the droop of the withering green.
Oh false! the Gods, abjurers
Of joy,"

and low and mournful was the hollow groan of the parting chords, as he flung the golden bound harp on the dripping altar, and the high priest tore the leaf from his brow.

II.

In the broad valley of the Danube, in the land of the Markomanen, the Hunic camps stretched far away, beside the blue waters which lap amongst the sedge.

Huge clouds of smoke rolled up, and on the faint horizon, hung beneath the Heavens,

* The disks or golden tablets engraven with runes, lost with "The Dusk of the Gods," shall again be found by the new born "Asas" or Gods, mongst the grass in "Ida's Valley."

marking the path of broad desolation, whilst like the sturdy oak, twisted by the tempest's blast, Germania's noble sons are swept away, or trampled 'neath the hoofs of Etzel's wild, unruly hordes.

Deep within the forest's depths, where scarce the winds sigh 'mongst the pines, "Father Adelhard" leaneth in the narrow cell, gazing into the clear depths of the tiny stream which, bursting from the wooded gloom, flows deep in moss and drooping buds, just at his feet.

The stray rays of sunlight illumine the aged features and softly suffuse with golden threads, the long silvery locks and beard.

"Oh years of patience and endurance whose trace is left upon this brow,—swift have ye flown since first to the Markomanen I bore Christianity's mild teachings, and spread the tidings of love amongst the people."

Through a break in the wood, he beholdeth the distant columns of smoke, which ascend-

ing from the camps in the valley below, show darkly against the deep red glow of the sinking sun.

"The accursed Hun! children of darkness and scourge* of Earth, who prey upon their fellow beings, and in destruction's reeking chaos, find alone delight!" "What forlorn cry disturbeth the lulling quiet of this so peaceful day!"

Again from out the sylvan silence reëchoeth the stiffled wail, and with garments tattered, and loose disheveled hair tossing wildly about her bare neck and shoulders, a woman breathless and pale, rushing up, sinketh exhausted at his feet.

"Oh, child of sorrow, what hath befallen thee?" and gently he raiseth her from the ground.

"Away, away! save me if thou canst!" and fast she clasps his knees with her white arms.

"Before mine eyes, surrounded by the

* Attila was called "The Scourge of God."

pack, fell noble 'Wilderick,' the spouse, pierced by countless blades."

"Hearest not! already loudly ring the echoes of their wild and savage shouts, which ever nearer draw, and soon the bloody band will be upon us!" "Away! whither shall we fly!"

"Flee—'tis too late—we must await them here—but fear not—"

"Too late! await them here! Never!" And springing forward, she snatches from her bosom a glittering steel which flashes aloft.

"Oh priest! fearful is the embrace of strange arms!" "Tell the fierce dark chiefs how eagerly 'Diethelinde' sought death!"

Like thought he wrenches from her grasp the swift descending blade. "What wouldst thou, child!" "Fearful is the crime thou meditatest!" "Knowest not, that our lot here on Earth is but endurance?" "Repent, and trust in God, who ever watcheth o'er his children, and harmless shalt fall the ruthless hand of thy oppressors"—and as he fin-

ished, a band of Huns came swiftly bounding down the path.

"Lost, lost!" she moans, and shuddering fearfully, cowers close within the cell behind Adelhard, who with outstretched arms, takes his stand at the entrance.

"Back!" he crieth—"what will ye here?"

"Away with thee, old greybeard," exclaimeth the foremost Hun springing forward, and striking him across the face, hurling him at a distance, roughly seizeth Dietelinde, whom he draggeth in triumph from the cell.

"Off with thine hand!" crieth a second Hun. "'Twas I who fell the spouse, and to me belongeth the woman!"

"And I," replieth the other, still keeping fast his hold upon Dietelinde, "was first to espy, and pursuing, capture her—the prize is mine!"

"Let go thine hold!" crieth the second once more.

"Never," his companion answereth, "the woman is mine."

Their dark eyes flashing, the chiefs glare at one another; then drawing their blades, spring grappling. With a wild cry, the first chief staggering backwards, falls at full length upon the ground.

"Ah ha! thou boaster!" exclaimeth the victor, darkly lowering o'er his victim. "Come, away ye dogs!" he continueth, turning to his followers, who hastily binding Dietelinde's arms, start to lead her away.

"Desist!" crieth Adelhard, throwing himself before them. "Oh chief! can pity no longer touch thine heart of stone?" "Liberate the woman, for fearfully avengest wronged innocence, the great God."

"Out of my sight!" exclaimeth the chief, pushing him aside.

"Deliver up the woman," commandeth Adelhard once more, and springing forward, round about her traceth a circle. "Back! or by this hand, I call down the wrath of

God upon thee!" "Upon the soul of him who dares approach within the magic of this circle, may forever rest the curse of God in all eternity."

Just then another tall dark warrior, followed by a second band, leapt the brook upon his steed, and catching the words, exclaimed:

"The curse of God! ha ha ha!" and tossed the body of a little child which dangled on his lance, at Adelhard's feet.

"Such are the rare blossoms with which the paths of conquerors are strewn," the old man sobbed, as he gently raised with his withered hands, the body of the child, long since dead.

And as he turning, shook his clenched fists at the retreating Huns, an arrow dipped deep to the feather in his breast, and amongst the blossoms by the murmuring stream, good "Father Adelhard" breathed out his soul.

III.

Night clasped the Earth, and silent glide the waters 'neath the palor of the heavens. The sighing breeze swept up in fitful gusts, and lingering, died amongst the pillars of the open halls of Gibich.*

Beside a moonlit column, beneath the wan festoons of scarcely waving vine above, "Ildico," daughter of "Gundekar," the far famed, lingered silent and alone.

Dark swept the heavy hair beneath the circling gold which glittered on her brow.

"Oh, low sweet murmurs! sleep, deep sleep,—drowsy forgetfulness—voices of the past—mother! hast come back again! where

* The site of the empire of the Burgundian Franks, situated near the confluence of the Rhine and Nekar, or occupying the present position of the old city of "Worms." The destruction of this empire by the Huns, is thought by some to have occurred under Attila, during his conquests along the Rhine, in 451—by others as early as 437.

tarriedst thou so long! how pale thou art, and cold is thy touch!"

"Ildico, my daughter, hearken unto thy mother's voice—the spirit of 'Uthe!'"

"Pale are the countenances of the Gods! Oh, endless space where gloom and past are one, and dim the shades beyond, nor time did wreck of ages: no longer lingering, rove Earth's bounds, the Gods, the blossom footed, but motionless 'neath the gloom of hanging brows, 'Wall-Father' broodeth silent and alone!"

"Long since through pathless space, have winged their way his feathered messengers* back to 'Walhalla's' realms, and silent are the whispering beaks." "From beneath the

* The ravens, Hugin and Munin, perched upon the shoulders of Wotan, whisper in his ears the news they have gathered in the World. Every morning they fly forth o'er the Earth, returning again in the evening. Owing to this fact, Wotan is also known to men as "The Raven God."

'World-Ash'* root, springeth the fount† unto light, yet shallow is the abode of lurking rays."

"Woe unto the World when they 'scape into space, and the fang of the 'Wolf'‡ hath fastened the swift flying orb."

"Harken, Ildico—feeble is the voice of 'Uthe!'" "No longer holdeth enchantment's ravished spell in check, soul's last consciousness, whilst scarce recalleth dim revived recollection, faint visions of that once first World awakening—nor fain would the spirit tarry."

"Once living conscious, ceased to be, as of self being itself freed, yet conscious ever!"

"Once I came, though self forgotten never was, nor come I now, and yet I am!"

"Beware, oh, Ildico!—deep and boundless

* World-Ash—Yggdraisils—"The Tree of Existence."

† The "Fount of Mimir."

‡ The wolves "Skoll" and "Hati" pursue the sun and moon. "Hati" runneth before the moon, and which he shall one day devour. So saith the "Wöluspa."

is the passion of thy soul—craved lamenting yearn of my now, not then conscious inmost being tensified."

"Put not thy trust in man,—all—all are weak, nor blandished swerving, seek to stifle conscience' voice, unerring instinct, which but alone in woman still existeth; long lost forgotten knowledge of time that was, but though death unsealed, the mighty mystery by which the spirit in unknown future may retrace the past."

"Beware, Ildico—forgotten—vanished all, is knowledge of Earth's existence." "Farewell, Ildico—"

"Stay, tarry—I adjure thee, linger yet awhile!" "Mother once, yet no longer—Uthe! 'Wala'*—thou darest not depart!"

"Not yet hath ceased the potent's mighty spell, the life which thou once gavest me, thine own intensest being's flame, deep nurtured in the soul's recess, which gave thee

* Wala—Sibyl.

power to pass the bounds of unknown mystic's shady realms!"

"Speak—speak! I will know all!" "Lay bare the mystery's secret utterance, whilst yet emotion lendeth voice to thy soon ever speechless spirit!"

"Scarce holdeth longer the charm, our once united beings' last communion!"

"Harken, Ildico—at first man was not, nor were the Gods, yet life ever was of which they sprung."

"All I know not, nor can either comprehend, nor utter all I know, yet one thing, which was and ever is, life's living essence, which is all, I know."

"Not until within Earth's confines, creation's allotment unto man, hath ceased to echo the wail of hollow anguish, shall once again draw nigh the happy 'blossomed Gods' return."

"Ildico—farewell—pale hast thou grown—I scarce perceive thee longer!"

"Oh, bright are the realms of the past—

future never was nor is—not yet hath felt thy soul the pangs of World's anguish dark despair!"

"Love alone of all Earth's existing is divine—immortal man, when once all that's earthly he hath overcome, and of love alone his being sprung!"

"Gone—gone—whither wilt thou, spirit!"
"Mother! Uthe!"

"Pallid as the moonbeam is thy cheek, Ildico—lonely are the voices of the night winds,"—broad hung the shield at his shoulder, and dark swept the wings of Gundekar's* helm, as he paused o'er the trembling maid.

* "Gundekar"—father of Ildico, and King of the Burgundians.

IV.

"Heigho! ye heavy-eyed, unconscious 'neath the spelled hand of sleep. Arise!" "Will ne'er dispel the dreams of soothing slumber?"

"No longer 'neath the heavens starréd host, sigh the night winds, voices of the vale, 'mongst Duna's* vine wreathed columns, but loudly greet the ever sifting rays, the ringing echoes of the wood." "Already

* "Schloss Dhaun," whose ruins still crown the summit of a spur of the mountain-chain, Hundsrücken, is situated in the most romantic part of the "Nahe Valley," in the "Nahe Province," between "Martinstein" and "Kirn." At the foot of the mount occupied by the ruins of Dhaun, winds the stream "Simmerbach" which, breaking in torrents from a rugged mountainous ravine, loses itself in the broad valley of the "Nahe" towards the east. Not only the name "Dhaun," but its older form "Duna" (mount), but also the discoveries in 1738 of certain grave mounds in its near vicinity, indicate the Celtic origin of the castle.

hangs at Kunno's thigh the glittering hilt—your chief, 'Kunno of the Dark Shield.'"

"Away! far into the fading dawn, amongst the blue hills, where glide the waters of the Rhine, we journey."

Still lingering, lurketh night's gloomy shadows amidst the boughs of rustling pine which clothe the mountain's rugged face beneath the walls of Duna, whilst high above the rushing broken torrent, is heard the ringing hoof of warriors' steeds, as Kunno, followed by the filing band, entereth the plains below.

For an instant the chief halteth; then raiseth the silver horn which hung at his waist to his lips, upon which he wound a long and lingering blast, which slowly ascending like the lifting mists, echoed in the halls above.

"Behold Drutwin, how fair a land is this," saith Kunno, once more shaking the reins of his restive steed.

"The budding plains, bedewed and blossomed decked, blush deeper than the crim-

son dawn, whilst garland-like, thin mists wreath the mountains."

"Aye, Kunno, my lord—yet methinks Germania's lily cheek hath paler grown, since captive she was led as paramour to grace the triumphs of the mighty liege of Rome, and now the flush which once virgin-like mounted her brow, hath turned to smile of wantonness, whilst we, her children, beneath the cursed yoke, fast forgetting the traditions of our fathers, who exulting drain the shells of 'Walhall,' weakened, share the lot of hirelings."

"Too true! Drutwin." "A curse upon thee Rome!" "Many moons tracked their waning courses whilst I as hostage stood within the walls as pledge for 'Tragaboda's' head, my father."

"Yet as I beheld the declining empire's dissolution, fall she must—I groaned aloud, for who shall free thee, sweet Germania, lovely maid, from these licentious embraces, which bring to light such feeble sons of

degradation, whose withered arms but smooth the path of desolation which leadeth to thy ruin?"

"At length methinks the moment hath arrived that banding, the nations may strike her to the heart—forever crush her at a blow."

"Yet too late, too late!" he exclaimeth at length. "Deadly is the venom that courseth in our veins, and fearful is the curse which resteth on the generations." "For we, who free and heedless roving, dwelt amongst the flowering meads, glorying 'neath the light of heaven, no longer adorn our women with the mellow glowing gold, delighting in the charm it lent to loveliness, but enticed and blinded by its glitter, stifling all emotions nobler self, coveting, seek to heap the shining hoards in barter for our souls."

"To him that hath, is but the lot of care, and he that hath not, falleth victim to the fatal toils of greed, for through gold alone, happiness is now attainable."

"Oh vain delusion!" "Mighty is the curse's spell which holdeth mankind, beneath which, his nature renouncing, he assumeth hypocrisy's fair form, faint shadow of assimulation, which like the gourd, all glowing with suffusion's bloom without, is hollow to the core!" and as the gloom of silence settles on the dark browed chief, he ceases to heed the ever creeping light which slowly gliding, enters the vale of shadows.

"Hath heard, my lord," saith Drutwin, once more arousing Kunno from the deep meditation into which he hath fallen,—"since the return of 'Giselher,' loud is the song of the never tiring bards, extolling his spouse, the fair Urwilde."

"Aye Drutwin, and much do I rejoice that on the morrow I shall once more greet the bosom friend, great Giselher,—for long hath he sojourned within the distant land where dwelt the blushing winsome maid,—and great and prolonged are the festivities which

reign within his halls, bidding all rejoice in welcome of Urwilde."

All day the stringing band of horsemen pursueth its way o'er hill and dale, until at eve, entering the broad valley where the pine sigheth on the slopes, Kunno calleth a halt.

Lingering as though reluctant to depart, the stream windeth silver as a beam of light amidst the fragrant meadows, flowing down the valley to join the many voiced waters of the Rhine:—and blue and curling ascendeth the thin columns of smoke, drifting cloudlike across the vale, whilst in the flames' red glare which ruddy glow beneath the ever deepening shadows, glitter the golden clasps and bracelets which band the broad muscles of the warriors' arms, who reclining upon the dark and shaggy skin, draining, pass the full deep horn, in never ceasing rounds of shout and song.

Night deepens, and Kunno takes his stand, leaning silent and motionless upon the long spear, gazing down the valley, the dim out-

line of which is just visible beneath the pale heavens.

"And doth the dark and gloomy grove attract the eye of Kunno," exclaimeth Drutwin, approaching to his side.

"The silent grove, where hangs the moon above the oak, and whose rays slanting, fall athwart the waters which hollow murmuring, glide about the low mount's foot?"

"Like wingéd fancy my thoughts have taken flight, whilst recollections crowd the memory with visions of the past." "Again the imprisoned light hath broke the golden bars of dawn, and before mine eyes slowly windeth the long procession headed by the high priest, guiding the sacred car, drawn by the two white bullocks, consecrated to the Gods; whilst I, in company with the long robed priests that followed, bearing the sacred flame in our midst, struck the harp's full chord to the ever swelling incantations, —for I was a Druid bard."

"Within the forest's deep recesses, we

halted 'neath the spreading oak, and golden sickle in hand, the high priest severed the sacred mistle from the budding bough which, after sprinkling the altars with the warm red blood of the bullocks, was placed within the sacred car and borne back in triumph to the sacred temple within the grove."

"It was the last gathering of the mistle in which I took part, for doubting the sacred rites, I was cast out of the priestly order, whose ever waning teachings however, not long afterwards succumbed beneath the all-crushing hand of Rome—and my uncle, the High Priest 'Winzo,' fled with the others to that distant isle called 'Albion,' where the setting sun sinketh beneath the blue ocean's waves."

Again Kunno is silent. "But come, Drutwin," he exclaimeth at length, "an irresistible longing and curiosity seizeth me, to once more visit the sacred grove, within which I have not set foot since the night I fled the vengeance of the wrathful Winzo,—or dost

thou also shrinking, tremble at the thought of entering the dark and silent grove, the abode of shades, where 'tis said, the ghosts of the long departed haunt the ruins of their dismantled temple, and the sacred oak drips with the blood of the sacrificed, whilst the burning wrath of the slighted Gods falleth upon whomsoever dareth venture within their violated sanctuary?"

"Lead on, my lord, and where the reckless 'Chief of Duna' ventureth, the steps of Drutwin shall not falter."

Piercing the gloom of the thick o'erhanging boughs, they halt at length on the edge of an open space, in the centre of which stand the ruins of the much dilapidated temple.

The pale moonbeams, flooding in upon the open space, hover like the spirits of departed souls amongst the dark shadowy boughs and broken columns—whilst about the whole place reigneth such intense silence, that the two intruders involuntarily draw closer to one another, as they stand gazing

upon the weird and long deserted haunt of the "Druid."

"Behold!" suddenly exclaimeth Drutwin in a low voice, gripping the arm of Kunno. "Dost see it, my lord!" and following the direction of his extended arm, the chief beholdeth the tall figure of a Druid, seated motionless upon a large flat rock, partially in the shadow of the temple—whilst the wan moonlight falling across the face, displayeth to view the pale and aged features and long white hair and beard of a priest who is gazing straight at them.

"By my life, 'tis the spirit of my uncle!" exclaimeth Kunno, beneath his breath—and as he falleth back a pace, Drutwin feels the broad arm of the Kelt tremble violently. Motionless he standeth, his gaze riveted upon the figure, then maketh a step forward.

"Back, my lord!" crieth Drutwin.

"I'll not!" and with flashing blade, he slowly advanceth beneath the cover of his shield,

As he draweth within a few paces of the figure, with extended arm it slowly arose.

"If thou be Winzo, or his spirit, speak! or by the shield of my father, I will cleave thee to the waist!"

"Restrain thy ruthless hand, ever eager for the strife, oh wild and wayward son of Duna!" "Dost thou, thirsting for the blood of Winzo, thine uncle, wish to bring upon thee the wrath and vengeance of the Gods?"

"Winzo, what dost thou here," exclaimeth Kunno at length, slowly sheathing the pale steel.

"At last the time is at hand when the degenerate sons of Rome shall sink beneath the ruins of the great empire's crumbling walls,—and once more, at the hand of the Druid, the servant of the Gods, shall blossom the true faith."

"Already hasten their messengers from the distant shores of the isle, where the white wave curls in the broad lap of the sea, and again in the smiling land, the Gods shall take

up their abode within the temple's long neglected walls, and the erring sons of Earth, casting aside Christianity's false teachings, return to the one true faith."

"Ha, ha!" laugheth Kunno, and the tall dark chief, fixing his eyes intently upon Winzo's face, continueth—"or thou wouldst say, that when the feeble hand of Rome hath relaxed her grasp and ye have scourged the Christian from the land, the Druid, 'neath the awe which superstition lendeth ignorance, thinketh to gain the long lost sway once more." "Better hadst thou remained amongst thy rocks and groves, than have endured the fatigues of the long and fruitless journey—for thou hast come too late, oh Winzo!"

"Retain the teachings of Christ, not as wholly set forth in the doctrines of his followers, abounding in johovistic subtilties, in which the creed of mere denial stands predominant to that of voluntary love and sacrifice—for only through soul-felt knowledge of self, can man comprehend the meaning of

the 'love for his fellows.'" "A creed whose watchword, in spite of the so called doctrines of mediation through a divine will, has ever been, 'be ye wise as serpents,' and taught the self abasement and humiliation of man—the humiliation of man, whose nature it is to exult and glory in the life of sweet Earth's existence."

"'Tis true, his followers have unblushingly and shamefacedly decked themselves with the fairest blossoms they stripped from mythology, and reviled and scoffed at paganism, the 'open harlot'—good honest soul, she knew no better—whilst Christianity in turn, hath outwardly become the modest prude, yet doffs her skirts in secret."

"Retain the lily buds in all their purity as when first despoiled, and gather up again the fragments of the wreath, ruthlessly wrenched from the brow of mythology!"

"Let faint again resound the chorus song within the temple's dark recess, and may the sacred flames forever glow upon the

altars of our faith, when halting words have ceased, o'ercome of adoration,—but have done at last with the mockery of a creed through the mediation of man."

"Even shouldst thou succeed in shaking off Christianity's light yoke, which now weighs upon Germania's sons, what wouldst thou offer in its stead?" "Listen priest, and harken well"—and seating himself upon the broad fragment of a pedestal, Kunno beginneth:

"Time hath rolled on apace since the Hellenic races, exulting 'neath the smile of Heaven, gloried in Earth's existence." "For they, their minds in perfect unison and harmony with nature's secret workings, found in her alone, the full expression of their longings and desires of all that is beautiful, occasioned by the joys of sweet existence, life's suffusing essence, and which embodyment of thought was centered in 'Apollo,' the executioner of the will of God."

"This Apollo however, was but the ex-

pression of the intense feelings and emotions to which this people gave utterance; their religion and belief sprang from the direct worship of the beautiful in nature, of which the individual was a part, resulting, though they were ignorant of the fact, in the absolute freedom of the race."

"Yet this people, above all others most happily blessed of nature and fortune, enduring slavery, learned too late, beneath the sway of all devouring Rome, that the exercise of liberty and power, derived from freedom of thought and action through the cultivation of the beautiful, is but transient, if not equally enjoyed by all."

"The Roman in turn, thought to recognize in the God Apollo, his own, and borrowed from the conquered Greek such customs and spirit of thought as seemed most pleasing, but he being of a more practical turn of mind, his God became that of barter—the God of deception, and in the universal degradation and dissolution that swiftly fol-

lowed, he found alone the complete and absolute gratification of his longings and desires in positive reality—his imagination and fancy being satisfied only in the actual realization of materialism's most positive self, and gloated on the wild and savage combats of both man and beast, which tore and rent one another—and in whose arenas, the blood of thousands of Germania's noble sons hath been shed."

"Out of the sterile soil of this chaos, arose Christianity, crying out against the abominations of the World, but the followers of Him, who gave His life to save the World, misinterpreting the true spirit of his teachings, 'the love of mankind for his fellow,' for the renunciation of the World, contempt of all joys and delights which the Earth hath to offer, and lastly, yet most fatal of all, the despising of self, in time began to err as hopelessly as the rest."

"For man the individual, in attempting to despise himself, not only rendereth himself

unworthy of the love of his fellow, but virtually becometh incapable of loving in return."

"Consequently, disavowing his own nature, acting independently of the immediate influences of his surroundings, in the vain attempt to free himself of this World of which he is a part, instead of works and deeds, had nothing but denial and disavowal, in renouncing all boldness of action and daringness of spirit, to lay as offering upon the altar of his God."

"In accepting the belief in this intervening God on Earth, through whose undeserved mercy he alone can be saved, man not only acknowledgeth his own lowliness and wretchedness of condition, but of his own free will, forfeiteth all right of self independence and freedom of action to liberate himself from the servitude of his degradation."

For a time Kunno is silent—then slowly rising and pointing towards a pillar which lieth upon the ground, he saith:

"As yonder pillar, oh Winzo! lieth deep

embedded in the moss, so shall the already tottering fames of Christianity, not as Christ willed them, one by one, sink into the oblivion of the irrevocable past."

"Oh ye priests! fair is the robe of hypocrisy, and smooth and flattering are your words,—but will ye never comprehend, that 'tis not with Gods, but with *man* we have to reck?"

"Believe ye people, in the words of Christ! Voluntary sacrifice and love, are not self denial!"

"Christ taught not denial but love—nor the redemption of mankind through God apart from man, but through man himself,—the God in man."

"In his hand alone, man's, lieth the solution of the salvation of man, yet not through fear but love; an all suffusing, irresistible, soul swaying love,—a love inspiring man to noblest, keenest deeds of action in defiance* of both *God* and *self*."

* The predominating feature in the northern charac-

"Nothing can check or resist the power and might already gained, he must either stand or fall alone."

At length Winzo, who through all this while hath motionless sat, listening to the words of Kunno, springeth to his feet in wrath, and with clenched hands and flashing eyes, turning upon the chief, crieth:

"Oh thou dauntless son of Duna!" "Blasphemous are thy words, and may the curse of the Gods alight upon thine head!"

"Was not the fate of 'Tragaboda,' thy father, who in the pursuance of this so called love of freedom, lost his life, warning enough?

ter was valor, and which took the form of general defiance of all danger, whether from Gods or men. Like the Greek, he embraced the world with his whole soul, revelling childlike in Earth's sweet existence. Having escaped in a thousand combats, and from innumerable dangers, he even prepared himself for a last encounter with death, whom he had all his life defied.

In this belief his victory was complete, the vindication of his fearless will never to yield—triumphant in death, often even through suicide, his fall was not that of a mortal, but God-like.

but must thou also, as thy ever wild and willful race, persist in the continuation of thy reckless, heedless course?"

"Hearken, 'Kunno of the Dark Shield,'—in the Heavens where the fates of men lie sealed, I have traced thy trackless star, which dazzling ascending the azure depths, pierceth the deep shadow which lieth beyond." "Beware! oh chief! lest approaching evil await thee!"

"Ha, ha!" and grasping the sparkling hilt, he swingeth the pale blade aloft, which glittereth in the moonlight.

"This is my star," he saith, and turning, followed by Drutwin, disappeareth in the darkness.

V.

"LINES TO AN INDIAN AIR."

I arise from dreams of Thee
  In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
  And the stars are shining bright.
I arise from dreams of thee,
  And a spirit in my feet
Hath led me—who knows how?
  To thy chamber window, Sweet!

The wondering airs they faint
  On the dark, the silent stream—
The champak odors fail
  Like sweet thoughts in a dream;
The nightingale's complaint,
  It dies upon her heart,
As I must die on thine
  Belovéd as thou art!

Oh lift me from the grass!
  I die, I faint, I fail!
Let thy love in kisses rain
  On my lips and eyelids pale.
My cheek is cold and white, alas!
  My heart beats loud and fast;
Oh press it close to thine again
  Where it must break at last.

P. B. SHELLEY.

'Twas not until the waning moon's pale disk had faded into blue, and once more swept the heavens, that the revels and carousing ceased, and the last wavering note died upon the bard's pale quivering lip, within the broad and lofty pillared halls of Drachenfels.*

Long and deep the dark and mighty chiefs had drained the glowing shells, and hollow rang the rattle of the shattered shields and

* The castle Drachenfels, the ruins of which overlook the Rhine. Half way up the hillside is the cavern where once housed the dragon, slain by Siegfried, the hero from the "Low Countries." Having bathed himself in the dragon's blood he became invulnerable.

clashing blades, until the last reluctant guest had lingering, bid farewell to the echoing halls of Giselher.

Within a cleft of sharp and broken crags which crown the rugged cliffs of Drachenfels, half concealed beneath the shadow of clambering vines and waving shrubs, all gnarled and tangled as serpents interlaced, Kunno leaneth upon the long sword, lost in meditation, and the half unconscious contemplation of the landscape's drowsy smiling face, which stretched away beneath the dim haze of the pale horizon.

Below the curling waters of the Rhine, sporting in the golden floods of light, toss the soft, white spray which lily-like, interlaces the sparkling waves, and which slowly gliding, fade in the shadow of the hills.

Lithe as the rustling of grass on the meadows, when the winds are low, is the foot-fall of Urwilde.

"How tall thou art!" and as she slowly glideth o'er the green beneath the sun-lit

boughs, the very flowers long to kiss her feet. Heavy fall the curling masses 'bout her glowing throat, yet he scarce saw the sunbeams nestling there, so golden are her tresses.

"Ah Kunno, my lord—methought I would find thee here," and low and sweet as the voice of waters are the words upon his ear.

"Giselher is not far distant—but what is this I hear of thy departure?" "Surely thou canst not think of leaving us so soon." "Much and long hath Giselher extolled the countless virtues of Kunno, the beloved friend, yet in the turmoil and ceaseless clamor of the festal rounds, but few and rare have been the moments I have passed with him whom I have so longed to meet."

"Of thy valor, 'son of the race of Duna,' no doubt lingereth in my mind, for many are the chiefs that bore away the broken shields, cleft by the strong arm of Kunno—yet since have ceased the festive revels, methinks it is the silent halls which cause such haste."

"Oh chide me not—fain would I linger

eager for the smiles which wreath Urwilde's lips, but of dire necessity I am forced to leave."

"'Twas only 'yester eve that messengers, much worn by fatigue and overhaste arrived, bringing word of Etzel's swift advance, who with his wild and countless hosts now pouring in upon the land, thinketh soon to wrest the sway from Rome—and what then I ask, will become of this fair land, when once the Hun hath gained the upper hand?"

"Humiliating is our present lot 'neath which we writhe and vainly strive to free ourselves, ne'ertheless, better are we thus, than forced to bend the knee to barbarism's menial servitude."

"Is't not so," he continueth, turning to Giselher.

"Aye, of a truth Urwilde, Kunno is right." "Not yet is ripe the time to form the league amongst Germania's sons, who rising, hope to break the sovereign power of hateful Rome, but with her combining, as soon as we

have driven Etzel from the land, we will turn upon her, and fearful is the retribution that awaiteth brutal Rome, who stifling Freedom's voice and noblest impulse, seeketh to teach the world that man is born to degradation's servile bonds,—the lot of slaves—" and as he finisheth, his dark eyes glowing with the flames of passion, the tall chief starteth to his feet, and with all vehemence striketh the broad slab of stone around which they are seated with his clenched hand, causing it to emit a hollow muffled sound.

"And now Urwilde, canst thou comprehend why I am forced to bid farewell to those from whom I am so reluctant to part," saith Kunno—and rising, taking both her hands in his, he continueth:

"This is thy penalty in allowing Giselher so long to woo thee, compelling him to tarry all this while in distant Burgundeland—for hadst thou consented sooner, I might then have lingered here until relief's long drawn sigh had escaped fair Urwilde's lips, till she

beheld at last the chief of Duna turn his back upon the Drachenfels."

"How shall I punish thee for this," she answereth, peering into his dark eyes.

"By visiting the halls of Duna, and when thou hast taught its haughty stubborn inmates that, bondage 'neath the hand of woman is sweetest lot of man, ha ha! I then perhaps returning, will claim the proffered smile and welcome which thou dost offer;" and as he slowly strode away, she notes how the light breeze playeth amongst the dark curls which lay in masses upon his shoulders.

Far below in the valley, she and Giselher behold Kunno check his steed, which tossing its neck, paweth the earth close to the water's edge—and as he raiseth the horn to his lips, they faintly catch the winding echoes which answering, die amongst the hills.

Unconscious she standeth, silently gazing in the direction Kunno hath disappeared.

Never before beheld in any one Urwilde, such striking countenance as his—which ever

changing, never but a moment wore the same expression; so like the sudden bursts of light which blending, change to shadow's hues; so like the flitting smiles and frowns which wreathe and cloud the Earth's broad face, beneath the shifting heavens.

"Didst note the long scar upon Kunno's brow, which faintly gloweth when the deep flush or heat of passion sweepeth across his countenance?" saith Giselher, breaking the long silence.

"Aye my lord—how came he by it?" "Methinks it must have very nearly cost the chief his life."

"Yes, but it saved mine," replieth Giselher,—"for in battle's turmoil, pressing through the throngs which I no longer held at bay, he beat them back, but instead of me, received upon his brow the long cut."

"Why didst thou not impart this to me before, my lord?" "If for nothing else, Urwilde must forever thank the Kelt within her heart, for through him alone, my noble Gis-

elher was spared," and pressing his hand between both of hers, she gazeth long and fervently into his eyes.

"Aye, and I too am bound to him in gratitude—for without Kunno, never would I have lived to win the peerless Urwilde."

"Much I wondered at his prowess," saith Urwilde, "many were the chiefs that sought to measure swords with him, but with his mighty arm he vanquished all, one by one, until none were longer found who dared oppose him."

"In all the land he cannot find his equal in arms," replieth Giselher. "Kunno is the last of the renowned and mighty race of Duna, and with whom the long line of Kelts will cease—for this mighty people which once possessed the land, but forced to yield the sway, hath long since turned its face towards the setting sun."

"Many are the shields which hang in Duna's halls, and long in after times will the bards sing of the deeds of her heroes."

VI.

Beneath the oak's broad canopy, half shaded from the golden floods of light, rest Urwilde and the spouse.

"How please Urwilde the secret nooks and crevices of the Drachenfels?" he turning, asketh.

"The place is fair, and never do I tire of roving 'bout within the castle's walls, and gazing on the distant landscape, where the wind-swept mount rears its head, and the winding chains lose themselves in the deep blue of the wooded vales beyond—or at night lingering, lost in rapture of the gliding floods below, where the stars faint glitter's soft suffusion, glimmers golden as the ever shifting sands."

"Yet beautiful as it all is, at times a sigh escapeth Urwilde's lips."

"Forgive me Giselher—I cannot always

have thee at my side, as I am well aware, for many and pressing are the duties which call away my lord."

"But—" and the deep flush suffuseth her countenance, whilst from her eyes shineth a love far more tender than the soft words she uttereth contain:

"Full well I know thou lovest me, yet thou art not affectionate enough." "Why dost thou never softly breathe thou lovest me?" "A woman longeth for the caresses of the man she loveth."

Laughingly he taketh her hand. "How naïve thou art, Urwilde—and canst thou ever doubt my love?" "Ah! many are the women, fair and beautiful to look upon which I have met in life,—and long was it, until I found thee Urwilde, for whom I most cared, and wooed and won."

"Like day and night is my love for thee—ever steadfast, never swerving—but as to thine, Urwilde, methinks thou wouldst have me believe it ever wont to waver."

"Had I not loved thee above all else on Earth, I never would have wedded thee, Urwilde,—canst thou not comprehend that?" "Of what avail is it, that I repeat a thousand times a day the words, 'I love thee'—was not once enough to convince thee of my deep and fervent love for thee?"

"Ah yes, I comprehend, my lord, but 'tis not that." "I only love to hear it, for although I already know it, I ne'ertheless delight in being reminded of the fact, that I am ever in the thoughts of Giselher."

"Ha, ha! thou jealous, silly child," he laugheth again. "Let us have done with all such sentimentality; 'tis too childish and scarce worthy of a second thought—not to mention all the words we have already wasted upon so fruitless a subject."

"Childish"—the word soundeth harsh and grating in her ear, and little doth he realize how deeply he hath offended her, or that he hath wounded her full heart, overflowing with love and affection—for 'twas but the

sweet and natural promptings of a woman's nature which had given utterance to such sentiment, and as he finisheth, he beholdeth the glow of beauty vanish from her face, whilst strangely shineth from her eyes—and pale to the lips—" thou alone art to blame, if e'er in life I chance to meet in him, the kindred being of my longing soul, and—" she hath almost exclaimed, when on a sudden, the full clear notes of a horn are heard at the gates, and a moment later, his garments rent and dust-stained, a messenger, panting with fatigue, rusheth up.

"To Giselher the mighty chief, my liege, King Gundekar sendeth greetings—and beggeth him to hasten with all speed to Burgundeland, where already countless warriors lurk, and Gundekar hard pressed, scarce longer able to withstand or check the fierce advance, feareth lest his land and people should succumb to the ravages of the savage foe."

"What sayest thou?" crieth Urwilde,

whilst faint trembleth her voice. "Hath already reached the Hun, fair Burgundeland, and now seeketh to subjugate and yoke her people?"

"Not yet Urwilde, noble spouse of Giselher,—but soon the storm must break, and on that day, great will be the slaughter beneath the frowning heavens, whilst many the heroes that greet the throngs gathered in the broad halls of Walhall."

"Go, speed thee back again to Burgundeland and say to mighty Gundekar, that e'er the dawn hath kissed the slumbering Earth to life once more, Giselher and many chiefs, whose blades have idly rusted in the sheaths hasten eager for the strife of shields."

Again Giselher is silent, then gazing upon Urwilde continueth:

"But how can I leave thee here alone, Urwilde?"

"Leave me here—and neither shalt thou depart without me, my lord." "With thee I go—for thinkest thou I could remain idly

here whilst perchance my people perish, and their cries of suffering echo high as heaven ?—and besides, a sister I possess, dark and beautiful as the shades of eve, who may perhaps, stand in need of comfort."

"In vain is thy remonstrance, Urwilde—too great is present haste, and as thou knowest, thine aid perchance, would be of but little avail."

"Yet I dare not leave thee—for 'Gysbrecht,' the fierce and revengeful, from whom I wrested the smiling lands, on beholding me depart, may seek to destroy the Drachenfels, and once more the lost possessions regaining, swear allegiance to mighty Etzel—whilst at the thought that thou mightst fall into his hands, I shudder."

"But hold ! beside one's spouse, nothing is more precious than the tried friend." "Kunno I will bid watch and care for Urwilde whilst I am gone, and in whose hands, thou art as safe from all danger as in mine

own—for in all the valley of the Rhine, none dare brook the wrath of the dauntless chief of Duna."

VII.

Slowly gliding, twilight wrapped the Earth in shrouds of gloom and lay upon the camps, whilst faintly pierce the glowing embers' dim suffusion, the ever creeping shades which fading, deepen into night.

Within the lodge, beneath the swinging lamp, amidst the circling chiefs, nodding Etzel sunk within himself, broodeth o'er the visions flame's creations lend to fancy.

Subdued and low, the timbrel's rolling swell, resounding rose to ringing clash which wavering, died again in wail.

And swiftly gliding, sweep the feet and glittering ankles banded 'bout in gold, whilst blushing beauty bares herself beneath the tangled tresses' mass, which vainly seek to

hide the charms they lend to naked loveliness.

The music ceaseth, yet with the last wild burst whose strains still echo in their midst, young "Gunther" catcheth the glance of Naïta's eyes, which glowing, plainly speak the thoughts that pass within her mind.—"I await thee, Gunther, thou knowest where, and tarry not I pray."

Though short is the hour, time with youth is reckoned not, whose soul ever sigheth for the footfall of the beloved. Backwards swing at length the heavy curtain's folds.

"Art come at last," exclaimeth Naïta.

"The King, at length awakening from the reveries which, like the magic of some strange spell ever seem to hold him bound when round about the sound of revel reigneth, addressed the chiefs in many words."

"But fair Naïta"—and fondly he stroketh the thick dark hair,—"if I mistake me not, the dark eyes of Etzel fondly dwelt upon thee, as thou glided in enchanting revolutions

of the dance—embodiment of grace and loveliness."

"Oh shame!" she crieth, "dost not behold how still the crimson lingereth in my cheek?" "Yet how strange Gunther, my beloved,—before I met thee I doffed myself, nor thought to blush with time—but since the hour I rested in thine arms, soothed beneath the calm of love's caress, the dance which once delighted me, hath hateful grown, for 'tis to thee alone beloved, I longer dare display the chaste and fair of woman's self."

"How sweet are love's awakenings!" she continueth, and soft are her white arms.

"Knowest not, that since we met, a flood of joy and light hath dawn-like, swiftly dispelled the gloom of life, and deep within the swelling bosom which ever heaveth a sigh for Gunther's step, the welling heart throbbeth in full response to thy soul's emotioned longings."

"Come, beloved—soft is the couch of silks." "Why art thou silent, Gunther?"

"Have ceased to fascinate the charms of Naïta, which thou so lovest?"

"Far from it, Naïta—but with the paling East which now breaketh, we part; how long, who knoweth?"

"What sayest thou!" "Thou wilt depart!" "Whither wilt thou—and without me?" "No! it cannot be."

"Long have I tarried here with Etzel, but now returning to my people, bear messages to Gundekar, king of Burgundeland."

"But why must I remain?" "Hast ceased to love thy Naïta?" "No, with thee I also journey. How couldst thou cruelly forsake the maid, thy Naïta, here alone in the distant land?"

"Impossible, Naïta—follow me thou canst not!" "The message which I bear to Gundekar is of much import." "Farewell! I must away—but e'er we part—I beg of thee, return the ring which I once gave thee."

"The ring!" she crieth, springing to her feet. "Behold how it sparkles," she continu-

eth, holding it before her gaze—yet deeper glow her eyes than the sapphire's flame, and starting forward with clenched hand and trembling with emotion, she slowly hisseth the words:

"The ring! Hast never loved me, but thinkest now to return to her who gave it thee?"

"Be calm! canst not permit that it adorn my hand until we meet again?"

"Thou hast mine own, which pledged our love, and ne'er again regainest thou the ring for which I gave my very life."

"Oh Gunther! thou canst not prove false, deserting me! return thou must! life without thee is death!"

"Ah beloved, hateful is the caress endured in lieu of gold—'twas but for Minne's loan that all the strength and fortitude which welled within my breast fell down, and I sank helpless—gave myself to thee, nor longed to wake again."

Silently he peereth into the dark eyes,—

beholdeth the white heaving bosom and palor of the brow,—and as he gazeth, in his heart he pitieth her. 'Twas not the parting he had wished, "yet, what boots it?"

"Thou mayest retain the ring," he saith.

"One kiss, my Naïta, and a short farewell."

The horsemen turn their backs upon the dawn, yet as they ride forth from the camps —"how pale is Naïta's cheek," saith Gunther. "She will soon forget however, but what would noble Ildico say, if she but knew? and as to the ring, why—I chanced to lose it!"

VIII.

Amongst the mazes of her golden tresses which wavelike fall about her shoulders, reclineth Urwilde upon the couch of soft dark skin, beneath the many rows of spear and shield which hang upon the walls above.

"Hearest not, Gudrune, the echoes in the vale below?"

"Aye, Urwilde, sweetest mistress,"—and springing to her feet, Gudrune hasteneth to the farther end of the hall, which overlooketh the Rhine.

Shading her eyes with her hand, long and silently she gazeth down into the valley, from whence proceed the sounds. "Swift bound the warrior steeds, and brightly glitter the lance and steel." "'Tis he! the chief of Duna!" she exclaimeth, facing her mistress.

"Kunno! hasten Gudrune, and bid him welcome, and say—Urwilde awaiteth him here within the halls."

"Welcome Kunno, 'Chief of the Dark Shield,'" exclaimeth Urwilde, rising from the couch and holding out to him the full horn which however, first raising to her lips, she returneth again.

"How tall thou art, and broad is thine arm," she thought within herself as he drainеth the contents,—but was it Urwilde's lips that lent the sweetness to the draught?

"Refreshing is the potent's draught, pre-

pared by the fair hand of Urwilde," he saith, passing the empty horn to Gudrune.

"Pleasant are thy words, my lord—yet I fear the task which thou hast undertaken may prove slow and wearisome, ere 'tis fulfilled—and thou perhaps, will tire of the Drachenfels before the return of Giselher." "But tell me—art thou severe, my lord?" "'Tis with trembling I awaited thee, and if so, I submit at once—my only longing is to obey," she saith, motioning him to her side.

"Pleasant and light are hardships undergone out of pure devotion to woman, and most happily blessed of fortune is he who, winning her good graces, receiveth in return Urwilde's smile as recompense."

"Modest are thy demands, Chief of Duna." "Knowest not, that of Urwilde's smiles, small account is taken?" "And besides, how different is the nature of a smile!"

"Gentler and sweeter by a thousand fold, is darkest frown than mildest smile in which

lurketh but the faintest trace of scorn or contempt."

"And bright and joyous as the sunlit heavens, is smile of innocence," he answereth.

"But of the smiles which come and go, but ever lurking, play about the lips, beware, oh Kunno! for bewitching as the toss of maiden's head are they."

"Yet 'tis but with reluctance and keen regret we part with the solitary nodding bud—for oft in aftertimes the sigh is heard—'it might have been,'" and continuing he saith:

"But of all the smiles which flit or lingering, give expression to the countenance, 'tis but the magic of that one rare smile, the strange unconsciousness of woman's first awakening which faintly wreatheth the lips, yet shineth from the eyes, and soul enchanting, voiceless breatheth the low sweet words —'my heart is thine,'—and during the silence which ensueth, each suddenly becometh

aware that they are gazing into one another's eyes.

"Ha, ha, ha!" she laugheth—yet deep is the flush. "Whither will thy rambling words?"

"But hast not heard, Kunno? desolate is fair Burgundeland, and loud is the wailing of her children." "Although repulsed, the hosts of Etzel swept o'er the land, fierce and devastating as the chilly northern blast, yet Giselher was spared, and damp is his blade."

"Aye Urwilde, silent are the sighing halls of Gundekar—yet ere the dripping blade is sheathed, the Roman and Germania's sons, for the moment forgetting the long and intense hatred and animosity of the past, joining hands against the common foe, great will be the slaughter, and ruddy roll the waters 'mongst the deep dyed fields."

"Three nights I travelled 'neath the stars, nor halted till the day grew faint, within the kingdom of the West Goth, where great 'King Theodorich' ruleth o'er his mighty hosts,

whose dominions stretch far away unto the vast waters which break and toss upon the coasts beneath the sinking sun."

"There already the Roman 'Aëtius,' with 'Theodorich' and 'Sangipan,' king of the fierce 'Alanen,' have gathered their hosts."

"In the swell of the young moon, just as the wavering light crept in upon the gloom, the disheveled 'women of the wood'* shook down the dripping branch upon the dawn, which glowed beneath the bloody drops, and we swore the oaths upon our buried blades, to stand or fall."

"The Saxon listened to the call of Gundekar, and I with the 'Franks'—together we will hasten to the appointed spot where we await the dreaded Etzel."

* The northern races, believing their women, especially the aged ones, to possess the power of clairvoyance or divination of the future, not unfrequently consulted them regarding the issue of battle before going into action. It was also often thought propitious to defer the pending battle until the appearance of the new moon.

"Ah, too true," exclaimeth Urwilde at length. "Man's worst enemy is self—and how false is ambition's glitter—for blinded by delusive creations, the inadequate conceptions of a deficient mind, man heedless of his fellow, seeketh but to satisfy the longings of self love and vain conceit—but come Kunno, long have we tarried in the halls."

IX.

"Oh, past! scarce traceth longer memory, the hand of recollection, the dim outlines upon thy paling face of once so vivid fancy."

"How sweet thy dreams,—yet vain, vain are all thy visions, which crowding up, now sweep before mine eyes, imagination's phantoms—and I behold delusion's faint flitting smile, whilst in mine ear, but resoundeth the ringing laugh of hollow mockery."

"Oh, soul! of the past thou knowest nothing—of the future less!" "Where the

World, when thou half dazed, shrinking, first sprang to light amazed, and expectant seeking, sought to find?" "Or finding naught, hadst thou soul self creating, shaped the mind's creations, breathing into being the wish of all that thou here vainly sought?" "Or lingered till had ceased on Earth reflections shadowed longings, ere thou once more continued thy long forgotten, now unknown further flight, whose aim along the invisible trackless path of space, where time is reckoned not, shalt once again reveal to thee all that thou first knewest, when at last advancing wheeling future hath joined with past which ever was?"

"Ah! Walaruna, lovely mother! Once more thine arms soft enfolding, draw Urwilde to thy scarce longer heaving bosom, and again I hear the low short broken utterances thou breathed, ere the last long drawn sigh, mellow as a blending ray at eve, escaped thy lips.

"Farewell Urwilde! fiercest gleam of my

impassioned soul, for whom thy father, noble 'Dietwart,' gave his life—thou hast the golden* tangled tresses of her the Wala† who first gave being to our race—the mark which I still bear, whilst in thine eyes gloweth the flame of love which leapt within mine heart."

"Oh, sweet 'wish-maid!' child of my blossomed love! not until your beings chance to meet, and each to each lay bare the tremulous quivering soul—expose the inmost secret thoughts of utterance lurking there, and 'neath the spell of inflaméd adoration's sweet unconsciousness, forgive each and all, alas! we are but mortal, hast thou loved."

"Mother! Walaruna! unlike the chilly touch of death, warm and living was thy parting passionate kiss, as thou expir'dst upon my lips."

* Golden hair is often mentioned in the Norse sages, as one of the essential elements of queenly beauty.

† "Wala"—sibyl.

"Behold the ring, which thou once worest and gavest me, and bade retain until love alone had wrenched it from my helpless grasp, still glittereth on my hand—nor hath Giselher, the dark and mighty chief, gained possession of the burning band."

"But why, as I once thought, can I not unburden to my noble lord mine inmost conscience?"

"The soulfelt voice repelled, refuseth utterance—what is it—I know not, nor striving overcome the invisible barrier set betwixt our beings."

"For what I longed and thought to find, I found not." "Strange that in him whom scarce I have met, I behold the eyes which once rose before me in my dreams, and longing peered from out the realms of fancy."

"What strange attraction is this, his presence ever lendeth?"

"As beneath the charm of some strange spell, my better parts half bound, forsaken of their fortitude, refuse to act." "Deep within

my breast, the low full tones he uttereth, vibrating 'long the subtle chords of sunny soul, resound two fold, as though struck by the breath of passion—whilst our beings, as though one of yore, each in the other the common part discerning, instinctively silent hold unconscious communion—and unawares, forgetful hanging, our questioning gaze meet, vainly endeavoring to fathom the shady depths beyond, where heaveth the broad boundless bosom of the soul."

"We feel, yet voiceless comprehend not emotion's hitherto unknown surge, which sweeping up, engulfeth as 'twere the past, and our former beings' self cast off, half unconscious and amazed, like some strange new thing, fluttereth the soul arrayed in the mild serene of life's dawn beyond."

X.

Bold stood forth and spake the envoys sent of Etzel—and as the last utterance ceaseth amongst the halls, foreboding silence, so like the lulling calm before the tempest, holdest the gathered chiefs.

Then with a shout, the shielded warriors, palid 'neath the gloom of nations, start from the couch and shake the gleaming blades aloft, till resound again the halls.

"Peace, peace! ye heroes, mighty in the strife of hosts! Relax again the grasp of hilt —not yet is season rife to draw the blades, whilst sacred is the envoy's mission"—and as he spake, ruddy shone the jeweled diadem upon the brow of Gundekar, king of fair Burgundeland.

"The hand of Ildico, 'the dark and peerless,' demandeth Etzel, 'ruler of nations,' and

of our daughters,* fairest those whose lillied cheek doth speak of maidenhood?" "Hath longer ceased to satisfy gold's glitter and subjugation of the kingdoms, the cravings of your mighty liege?"

"Return! impart to Etzel that which ye have seen and heard, the answer ye have just received, dark depicted in the countenances of many chiefs."

"And this, oh Gundekar! the message we must bear to Etzel, King of Nations?"

"Aye, the answer ye have heard! why tarry longer here within the halls of Gibich?" "Go! speed ye back again, and say—the gathered hosts await to greet the dust-cloud on the faint horizon," and long is applauded murmur of the chiefs, in answer to the words

* It is a well established fact, that during the time of Attila, and the earlier ages of our history, it was the custom of victorious nations to demand hostages of their conquered or subdued enemies, not only as security against further revolt, but also by forced intermarriage to bind more closely through blood, the ties and relationships of the two nations.

of Giselher, who in their midst, resteth 'neath the pillars.

"Away, away!" again spake Giselher. "Is't not enough, that patient 'neath the sway of Etzel, we have borne in turn the cursed yoke ye wrenched from Rome—but must endure the shame ye think to heap upon unsullied innocence?"

"Enough! wild is the neighing of steeds!" "Go say the banded nations, Germania's sons, exulting greet death than rather longer bow the neck to servile barbarism's sway."

"Giselher, Giselher! lord of chiefs!" bursteth from the throngs.

"Again mark ye how the spirit of our freedom loving fathers, who ever held the land against the common foe, findeth voice in these, their sons."

"The horn, oh chiefs! may ruddy drip the flowing brim in endless rounds, whilst let again resound in song in answer to the full chord, the tales and deeds of yore."

"Oh man, whither leadeth swerving course

of this, thy bauble life, whose distant goal is still as faint as when thy being first began?"

"Who gave to one the right to those opposing, all refusing to obey his will, to heedless trample under foot?"

"What power doth such a one possess, or spell exerciseth he upon mankind?" "'Tis but the awe of superstition through which the conqueror, goaded of ambition, forgetting all but self, leads and sways the blinded many."

"Ah man! vain, vain are all longings and attainments thine, till thou at last hast comprehended that, not in hand of him who brightest shineth, is held the power which swayeth thee, but in thine own, the many."

"Not of individual, but from the many ariseth power, force irresistible, which holdeth in check or meteth bounds to all mankind."

"Ye, the people, and only ye, custom adopt, or from such rules which obeying, become the law."

"The law however, but remaineth precept as long as 'tis of the many obeyed, which ceasing, becometh naught." "Why endure the yoke of few which oppressing, ever weightier groweth and bears you down?"

"The few, some of fortune happily blessed, but most through greed of gain, forget the anguished cry of dark World's sufferings—and who, if 'twere not for you, oh people! through whose ceaseless toilings in lieu of life's existence, hold their sway, would perish to a man, unless they turned the hand in search of living."

"Earth and all her countless treasures was given to man to equally enjoy and share in common."

"Why incessant strive ye in the search of gold, the worm which hidden, gnaweth at the root of happiness, and to which latter but few attain?"

"The few who hoarding, hold the sway on Earth through the power of gold, rob the many of this life's joys—remorselessly force

them in never ending sacrifice to serve them."

"All men first spring alike unto light; 'tis but circumstance which must be equalized."

"As decayeth the withered grass, blasted by the northern winds, so are born anew the generations which pass away, and are forgotten—yet fresh and unimpaired as life's eternal verdure, the peoples arise."

Again the song resoundeth through the halls, yet heedless, dream-like, rose before the great chief, future visions of returning past.*

XI.

The chief of Duna struck the chords—before them swept the landscape veiled in haze, and at the zephyr's fitful sighing breath, the sunlit leaf rustles low and soft in whisperings.

Self forgotten, half unconscious, pensive

* Man's return to nature.

leant Urwilde, listening to the wild sweet strain he sung of past that was, and deeds unknown, save to the treasured memory of the bard which, caught in strain the rare repeated words that fell perchance from minstrel's lip of former times, as it rang above the din and turmoil of the battle's surge, or echoed in the hall of chiefs—or perchance was faintly wafted on the night when the stars hung bright on the heavens.

He sang of kings that ruled the land, and led the warriors to the mighty strife of peoples, yet how it was she could not guess, for although each tale and song surpassed the last in deed and wonderment, all seemed one and same. For scarce had fate half run her course, than each in turn, the monarch and the warrior bold, curbing passion's fiercest flood, restrained the mighty impulse of the soul which ever drove them out upon the world, and trembling awed, kneeling lay the glittering crown they wore at woman's feet —and as his wandering fingers ceased to play

amongst the scarce longer vibrating, quivering chords,—

"How like a sigh Kunno, are the lingering notes of a dying strain," she saith.

"Music is a woman," he answereth. "For like her who ever longeth for the kisses and embraces of the man she loveth, only then first exposeth her true nature, laying bare the mystery of her secret soul beneath the passionate lavished caresses."

"Where halting words have ceasing, failed of utterance, music beginneth, and 'tis through it alone that the deep impassioned yearning longings of the soul find voice."

"The lone distress of music's wail is but the response of stifled anguish's cry, which rendeth the human bosom, nurtured through dim ages of the past—or all delights and joys which our beings sway, of music's voice o'erwhelmed, emerge into one full rapturous ravished flow of ecstacy."

"Yet alas! the spirit which transported, wingeth its way through mystery's realms of

delight, vainly striving to free itself of the soul swept agonies of Earth's cold imprisoned clasp, awakeneth but once more to the pang of this dull world's consciousness."

"Much hath Giselher related to me of thy life, Kunno, and thou must have roving, wandered much and wayward, far in distant lands."

"Aye, of a truth Urwilde—already in my tenderest youth as ever was the wont of Duna's race, I roamed as minstrel from palest dawn to the eve of slumbering waters —to the land of strange unknown nations, and dwelt amongst the people."

"Much saw I, and heard strange things; beheld the shadows trace the calm of woman's brow, and enraptured, lingered long enamored of the charmed flush—or exulting, glorying in the strife of hosts, fought till the hawks hung 'neath the heavens."

"And in all thy wanderings Kunno, inflaméd of her charms, hast thou never met with her, the woman who returned the glow

of passioned love that welled within thy bosom?"

"Speak, oh chief!" "By my troth thou hast—or hast thou ever tiring, sought a new companion of thy restless, never satisfied affections?" and as the words die upon her lips, Urwilde beholdeth the scarce shadowed countenance faintly pale, and how melancholy, yet intensely longing is the look which shineth from his dark eyes.

"Hearken, Urwilde." "Woman's charms and fascinations are irresistible, and when men say they are lightly overcome, and unmoved by her attractions, they have never loved—believe them not, for 'tis false, and but the voice of their own vain conceit that speaketh, and in their hearts they have lied."

"Woman is the lovely blushing blossom of the field." "Ah! bright are the eyes that have beamed on me, whilst the wondrous beauty and strange magic of her presence, I never can resist, and fierce hath the flame of passion licked my heart—yet in all my wan-

derings, never have I met the woman who returned the deep, boundless flood of love and passion my soul demandeth."

"Once methought I loved." "'Twas while I restless tarried within the confines of mighty Rome." "Dark dark, was the beauty of her shadowed loveliness, and fain lingered I enraptured of the fathomless gaze, but the charm which at first her presence ever lending, seemed to hold me bound, ceased with time—for 'twas but a half response my soul's emotion's echo received in turn, and once more awakening, I broke away."

"Many summers have since then drooping, sunk in never waking slumbers," and soft and low as silence, is the murmur of the winds, till Kunno roused within, once more dispelleth the haunting visions of the past, and turning saith,—"long and patient hath Urwilde listened to the deedless tales of Kunno, and much have I related, yet not all, but behold, Urwilde—how the shadows lengthen."

XII.

"Loud is the note of thy horn, oh Gunther! son of Gewart." "I behold thee from afar! Like the beam of the morning which kisseth to life the blossom upon the plain, or darteth along the gliding waters, is light of thy countenance."

"In thy pride thou movest!" "Bright is the mane of thy steed, whilst hollow the sound of thy shield."

"Again I catch the echoes!" "Rejoice, oh Ildico! for he is nigh, and thou, oh heart! why slumberest thou?"

"Is't thus thou welcomest him, the long absent, for whom thou sighest?" "Behold the smile of recognition!" "Infatuation shineth from those eyes, and still misgiving lurketh in the soul?"

"Hail to thee, Ildico, daughter of Gundekar!"

"Why hasten not the steps of her 'dark of beauty,' in answer to the call of him who, reluctant bid the sighing maid farewell?"

"Welcome Gunther, ill knowest thou the throb and pulse of woman's heart."

"Art not aware, that oft when fiercest yearns the soul of woman, 'tis ne'er betrayed by outward sign, but cold and indifferent she seemeth?"

"Many moons have held the watch of night, since thou departed,—and lonely were the halls, beloved."

"Long tarried thou in the distant land, whilst few were the messages that came from thee."

"Methinks my lord was loth to leave, or found perchance, some solace for the soul in other eyes than her's, which eager searched the faint horizon."

"Ah Ildico! fair as the sunbeam when the showers have ceased—lovely as the dusked eve of lurking shadows—ne'er hath being

fathomed thy gaze, but longing, sighed again."

"Behold! here at thy feet again I kneel in supplication—once more as ever beg to serve thy being which I worship—and can longer chide the heart?"

"Arise, oh Gunther!" "Let joy all doubts dispel."

"No longer shalt my lord in supplication, trembling ask the boon of Ildico, which she so freely giveth."

The chief arose, but as he silent gazeth on the maid, faint palor slow o'erspread the brow of Ildico—and swift she spake:

"The ring, the ring! which once adorned thy hand, no longer perceiveth mine eye its glow!" "Where the ring which I once gave, and bade thee keep?"

"The ring! alas beloved! cruel fate hath wrest from me the band which I so cherished, and fain would have retained." "Unconscious sunk I on the field—on swept the tide of battle, and when I awoke to life again, gone

was the ring, but not from memory had vanished thought of thee beloved, who gave it me."

"Lost, say'st thou?" "And thou too weak to retain possession of the gift of woman?" "'Twere better perchance, hadst thou forever sunk upon thy shield, than return without it!"

"He that thus lightly guardeth such precious pledge, might perhaps at times forget the oath he swore, betray the heart!"

"Peace, Ildico! why cloud the summer of our love?"

"Forgive, oh Gunther! the cruel thoughts; heed not the wandering words prompted of a jealous heart"—but low muttereth Ildico—"misgiving chilleth the soul, and yet I know not wherefore." "All, all are weak! Why camest thou Uthe,* oh, mother!"

"Come beloved! why longer torture self? but banish dark distrust." "Knowest not,

* "Spirit of Uthe"—see Chapter III.

that but few are the hours still permitted us to gaze and sigh, ere with the king, we sally forth to join the banded nations, countless warriors, gathered on the plains of Catalaunia?"

"Broad is thine arm, my lord, and whither thou leadest, 'tis death to the people!"

"Hear'st not, how within the walls resoundeth the warriors' tread? and loud is the sound of steel."

"Farewell, Ildico—time presseth—I must to the king."

"Until this eve, when all are gathered in the halls, Gunther sigheth for the glance of thine eyes, bright as two stars that beam from the broken cloud."

Half unconscious her lingering gaze followeth the retreating chief. Faint sigheth the wind amongst the ungathered tresses, and low is the breathing of the white bosomed maid.

"Oh foreboding! dark is instinct's import,

and yet thy meaning, dull perception fails to fathom."

"Once loved I! love I not now? or hath never yearned the soul its utmost, as I once thought?"

"Joyless the heart, except to outer World's delights, which vainly throbbeth to unanswered longings."

XIII.

They wander on beneath the green and shadow lurking boughs, where the gold beam nestles 'mongst the moss and fern, close to the low voiced waters.

Oh wondrous dell of drooping buds! and as they rest by the dark pool's edge, Urwilde turning, sweetly smiled, yet spake not, and like a sigh the faint flush fled and mantled o'er her lily brow.

"How wondrous chaste and fair thou art!"

Unconscious hangs his gaze, long enraptured of her loveliness, until at length, in accents low and soft, he breaks the scented silence.

"Once more, Urwilde, past before mine eyes hath risen, and like the fate of noble 'Dietwart,' thy father, who gave for thee his life, was that of 'Krimhild's,' my mother—whilst the dying, parting words of 'Walruna,' still echoing in mine ears, recall the many recollections forever stamped upon the memory."

"Great was the shout of warriors—a thousand lance glittering, shook beneath the heavens, whilst the broad shield rang low and hollow, as 'Godomar,' my father's brother, led Krimhild, the proud dark maid, daughter of 'King Gyselbrecht,' to the halls of 'Duna'—and many were the chiefs that came to drain the horns, and gaze upon her far famed loveliness, whilst ceaseless were the voices of the bards."

"The guests departed, and May lay upon the land—yet oft Krimhild was heard to

sigh, whilst pensive and wistful was the longing far off look of her gaze."

"Not long however, was Godomar of grudging fate, the envious, permitted to enjoy the mellow nuptials; for scarce had ceased within the halls of 'Duna,' revel's clamorous voice, than King 'Gyselbrecht,' of fierce and mighty foes oppressed, who far and wide lay waste the blossoming lands—bade Godomar hasten with all speed and join in the strife of swords."

"Far into the distant land where the lingering light last pales on the heavens, he led the darkest of his warriors; but scarce had faded from the view the band upon the blue distance, than Tragaboda, my father, long absent from 'Duna's' burg, returned laden with the spoils of many battles."

"High above the others swept the winged helm, as 'midst the clamorous welcome down the hall he strode, where silent and alone stood 'Krimhild,' waiting the mighty chief."

"Their gaze met,—and long and silent was

each the contemplation of the other, till voiced confusion dispelled at length the speechless palor of their wonderment."

"Far too swiftly swept the golden summer through the land, nor seemed to linger 'mongst the waving fields or sighing forests' depths, where the shaded waters murmur 'neath the rocks, and with each silvered paling moon that hung upon the heavens, fiercer grew the passion of their souls, till resistless, of love's might o'ercome, 'Krimhild,' 'the blushing,' helpless sunk in Tragaboda's arms."

"The slumbering landscape's face, deep dyed in Autumn's melancholy hues, heralded exulting Godomar's return, who thought to greet the winsome bride."

"Ah, fierce and speechless rage!" "Dark and nameless hatred rent and tore the heart of Godomar, and fearful was the strife of brothers, for they fought for woman—and by the hand of Tragaboda, fell brave Godomar the brother."

"Lovely was Krimhild, thy mother, 'Kunno,' my father oft in aftertimes was wont to say."

"Beware Kunno—thou hast her eyes, dark and deep, whilst in thy bosom slumbereth the united passion of our souls," and as the words slowly ceased upon his lips, as if by some strange instinct, both have risen.

Pale and trembling stands Urwilde, whilst with head thrown back, he beholds the curve of her noble neck, and deep shineth the gold of her tresses. He beholds the light leap in her eyes, and feels the fierce intensity of her gaze, which wavers not.

Quick cometh her panting breath, yet speechless still they gaze, until at length her parting lips low murmur: "Kunno!"

Oh, nameless bliss of love's first kiss! as lips to lips each feels the mighty throb of being's impulse and like the stifled passioned surge of all humanity, is the heaving of her bosom.

"Urwilde, my beloved!" close he clasps

her to his heart, and breathless 'neath the passion of his kisses, her drooping head softly sinks upon his breast, whilst enraptured shines her lovely face, unconscious 'neath soul's ecstacy.

"How came it Kunno?" soft she breathes, and deep laughs the love in her eyes.

XIV.

"Oh woe, woe is me! betrayed the bosom friend! and what will noble Giselher say and think of Kunno whom he trusted?"

"Oh honor! what hath become of thee, and all truth and light when trusted, proveth false, the tried and truest of all friends? and hath all virtue fled this world?"

"Away, away! no longer dare dark passion's demon linger near unsullied innocence —I who caused thy fall!"

"But whither, whither leadeth thy mad

flight?" "In vain within remotest Earth's confines, beneath deep fathoming, all perceiving Heaven's eye, seeketh to conceal buried hidden shame, its wanton flush from virtue's all pervading rays."

"Ah death, sweet death! thou whose hand alone can free of World, existence' unhappy being's self, come!"

"'Tis thou, soul's longings joyous welcome, whilst unconscious, past forgetting, never more awakening seeketh being, but expiring, mingle lost forever in the great immeasurable unknown."

"Oh! calm the fierce unruly flames of passion, fed by pang of dark remorse, and cease beloved, thy mad wild raving."

"Think'st thou that the anguish of Urwilde is less intense than thine?" "That she, Urwilde, who proved false, betrayed the noble lord, coveteth less Death's cherished, longed-for release from this now o'erburdened life's existence?"

"Life without thee is worse than death!

and think'st that thy parting with this World can smooth the pangs of my so guilty conscience?"

"No! together we must share the common fate in life or death!"

"Shame—dishonor—oh! shallow, false delusion—whither hast thou led clear reason's understanding? and will unerring instinct, guiding hand of conscience, ne'er dispel the shrouding gloom of dark despair, where lurketh death's phantoms?" and on the mighty impulse, the "chief of Duna" starteth up.

Again defiance resteth on his brow, whilst faintly play the smiles about the curling lip.

"Behold, Urwilde," and at the words he gently stooping, raises her to his breast,—"how laughs the World, arrayed and decked in the joyous light and blossomed May of our love."

"'Tis Life, not Death, that beckoneth with outstretched arms!"

"Why longer seek to torture conscience

with vain imagination's torments, by brooding o'er dead past which perishing, vanished 'neath the spelléd magic of love's first kiss?"

"Is it base, that at last through Earth's wide wanderings, never tiring, ever seeking, our beings recognizing, greet the long-sought, unutterable longing for which they ever pined and yearned in vain?"

"No, no! sacred is love's mighty torrent passion, which resistless, sweeping being free of all untruth and false enslaving earthly conceptions, beareth away the soul upon the boundless sea of longings." "For is not bliss and nameless joy of ecstacy, except the glow of emotion's fierce intensity, the forgetting of all this World's existence?"

"Too true, too true!" she cries aloud. "Pure and sacred is the new born joy of life's existence," and wondrous shines the beauty of her countenance, soft arrayed of love's suffusion.

"Hail, hail to thee! sweet beam of light, that guiding, led the erring steps of falter-

ing soul, beset in Earth's dark labyrinths, to dawn of love, eternal life!"

"At last, at last! I forever clasp and hold in thee, the one great longing of my thirsting soul!"

"Here here, beloved lord, my life, my all! accept the glittering burning band my mother, Walaruna gave!" "Forever scorching, may its glow adorn thy hand as token of our wild, sweet passioned love,—for no longer doth Urwilde, once so strong and proud, possess the strength and fortitude that formerly so firmly held it in her grasp—but helpless 'neath unutterable bliss of love's felicitous embrace, delivereth up to thee, both it and my no longer former conscious self, o'ercome of speechless joy."

"Urwilde! lovely, sweetest bride!" and faster rain the kisses on her lips and brow, as heart to heart their tremulous beings throb, whilst 'neath the dewed showers of love's caress, she softly murmurs:

"Kiss, oh kiss, till o'ercome, unconscious in thine arms I sink."

"Oh life of life! 'tis vain that words seek expression of the soul's emotion, when lips to lips, about my neck the gentle pressure of thine arms I feel."

"Ne'er have I loved till now." "'Twas thou, Urwilde, who first revealed to me the wondrous mystery of that sweet word, and from the very hour when first we met, when first thy shadowed loveliness across my path did fall, I loved thee, loved thee ere the heart's great throb betrayed the bosom's secret, and longed to sink in adoration at thy feet—forever speechless, worship at the flaming shrine of thy impenetrable, fathomless gaze."

"And I Kunno, loved thee, yet knew it not —unconscious was our souls' communion."

"Oh nameless joy of love's united beings' bliss! thine, thine I am, all thine is Urwilde, heart and soul!"

XV.

"What color are thine eyes, Urwilde?"

"Such lights I ne'er beheld, now leaping, livid glow as palest flame, whose intense gleam seems to scorch the very soul they pierce; or ever mingling, softly blending, shade to hues more mellow than the flush of faded eve, so like the gleam of eternity's spent rays."

"Thou, thou Urwilde, of all women, art the only one that, binding through the magic influence and fascination of thy strange being, could ever awe, and hold in check the wild unruly nature of my being." "Ne'er in all Earth's wanderings, or most vivid dreams of swiftest fancy, beheld I, or possible conceived, such harmony of loveliness could blending, shape itself as I behold in thee."

"I love a woman that is all suffusing blush

and bloom—all love and passion, both are one, like thy being fiercely passionate to the very soul's last throe—passionate as death's clasp is unrelenting."

"Oh, wondrous proud and noble being! thou whom I worship and adore, and whom my being must ever serve—like some strange wild flower thou art, which I trembling, fear to break 'neath too fervent impulse of caress."

"Ah noble Kunno, my lord and chief! no words can utter what I feel—lay bare to view soul's slumbering emotions, which love's whispered accents, low and sweet, arouse within the bosom."

"Thou art my God—my yearning soul's one longing!"

"Know'st not, that Urwilde, whom thou call'st so proud and strong, is helpless as a child within thy clasp, and longs to feel her weakness in the arms of him she loves, who first caused her unrelenting will to bend?"

"Oh, how different from all other men thou

art—so strong, and yet so gentle." "To thee, and only thee, can I pour out my whole soul, confide in thee each and every thought, nor conceal one secret my being e'er possessed."

"'Tis only then a woman really loves, when in her kindred soul, her own being's full response is heard and felt."

"The caresses, which thou beloved, so freely lavishest upon Urwilde, never of Giselher were bestowed—the affections and caresses for which my soul so thirsted in vain." "Many, many have been the nights I silent wept away, and with the joyless light, all tear-stained traces brushed away, once more vainly sought to laugh the aching heart free of sorrow—for my spirit is too proud to beg for love."

"Thou, Kunno, hast begged me to relate the past of life—all, all that e'er befell me, even unto the dim visions of the past, where recollection slips the memory,—when I so small, was wont to hide amongst my heavy

hair, yet even to this, Giselher remains indifferent."

"For once relating of my life's transpired events, he on a sudden loud exclaimed:"

"'What is all this to me, child—know'st not, that it is thee alone, I cherish?'"

"And since then, silent are Urwilde's lips."

"Ah strange, strange and incomprehensible is all to me, that one could linger at thy side without longing to know all that e'er befell thee, and scarce had I believed that Giselher could be so deaf to that which is more precious than life to me."

"Oh, misconstrue not my words, Kunno, for reproach to Giselher." "I understand it all; 'tis but the instinct of his nature, which he obeying, followeth."

"His nature lacks the great affection and sentiment of thine, for which my being ever craves—and never comprehending, can he understand my nature, so different from his own, which as thou sayest, is all passion and

longing, ever restless pining to unburden its soul self."

"Ah! keen is the pain at my aching heart, Urwilde, and can he never understand?"

"No, no—in vain I beckoned across the fathomless abyss, set betwixt our beings, but he comprehended not."

"And even had he understood, what difference would it make? we would still be as far apart as ever, for only like natures can each the other comprehend."

"Start not when I repeat, that never have between us passed, other thoughts than all the World might know—and I may say, like total strangers have we journeyed through the wastes of life."

"But why did I wed him? thou askest." "Many were the chiefs that visited and lingered long within the halls of my father, and of all, Giselher seemed tallest and noblest, but how oft is not the budding heart of maid deceived of World?"

"Oh! forgive, and forget what thou hast heard, yet thou must know all!"

"Think not that I have ceasing, never loved him—my love for him hath not changed." "Giselher is noblest of all beings." "Oh, were I, base ignoble being that I am, worthy of such love as his!"

"Oh anguish, Kunno!" she groaneth aloud. "I cannot help it that I love thee!" "In vain I struggling, sought to crush the unutterable longings which on first beholding thee, and even since, took possession of my whole being—and battled with the fierce and mighty passions which ever tore and rent my bleeding heart, whilst like the wail of dark despair, was the voice of conscience, crying for release—until o'ercome, unable to longer resist, endure the anguish, tortured being suffered —sunk unconscious in thine arms beloved! and at last, at last, my soul found rest!" and long and tender kiss his lips the palor of her brow.

Again she starting crieth: "Oh Kunno,

my life! love thee I must, whether I will or not!"

"But tell me! canst thou forever love and cherish her of broken vows, who proved false to the noblest of all beings?" "Speak, speak! I must know the truth!"

"Broken vows—and neither hast thou broke the vows which thou once gave to him, whom thou promised to cherish and obey—nor proved false, for thou lovest him ever as at first." "Thy love for him hath not diminished, 'tis only not as I, he doth not possess thy whole being."

"A curse upon the being, that first from woman wrung the vow she ne'er can keep, and forced her to distort the countenance of light and truth with hideous hyprocrisy's faint smile, the sickly shadow of the cankerous lie, deep nurtured in the breast, and ever chokes the fount of life and light, the heart."

"Come, away Urwilde! no longer shall soul's sorrow burden thee, or anguish rend thy bosom!"

"Away, away! to life and joys eternal!" "Already paws the restive steed the earth, eager for love's flight!"

"Lead on my lord! in life or death I share with thee the pain or lingering gleams of joy our beings still await!"

"Pain, Urwilde,—what sayest thou? Vanished, vanished is all joy," he slowly mutters, and as he silent stands, Urwilde beholdeth the tall chief shudder.

"Yes, yes, I understand," he saith at length. "No longer canst thou endure to meet his gaze, but fearest that the pangs of conscience may forever rob thy soul of peace and rest,—but think'st thou that my remorse in depriving him of life's most precious gift, is less than thine?"

"Oh no, Urwilde,—full well I comprehend the consequences of the step we meditate." "That through the joy and happiness we think to gain, perhaps destroy the life of him, whom we most honor and prize above all else."

"But even should he perish,—despise me for the utterance if thou wilt,—not the slightest shadow of blame can he cast upon us, who act in virtue of our lawful right—prompted not of selfishness, but inmost conscience' voice, unerring instinct, which ne'er the soul deceives, most precious gift of nature—and which alone, through the lapsing age of time, can guide the erring spirit to the unknown realms of bliss and immortality."

"For thy sake, Urwilde, through the great love my being cherisheth for thine, can I forgetting, live unconscious to all else but thee."

"Until thou also, beloved, can o'ercome this World's outer conscience' simulation, never could our beings together pass the great gulf which divideth dark Earth's anguish from the realms of light and joy."

"Until then, thou must remain with Giselher—" and as he gently strokes the heavy golden tresses, softly sobs Urwilde upon his breast.

XVI.

Starlight clasps the slumbering Earth, and wreathes in smiles the gentle brow of night which pausing, gazes on the drooping buds, unconscious dreaming of the low wind's kiss and soft caress,—whilst o'er their cheeks still mantles love's first flush, and sighing heave their fragrant bosoms.

Yet as she slowly glideth on, no breath of vagrant breeze disturbs her trailing dewy tresses, which mark the path her silent wanderings take.

Beneath the flooding beams of light, at length he breaks the silence of their beings' low communion.

Fervently he presses unto his lips the glowing mass of curling gold, he gently severs from her clustering locks.

"Forever may it nestle at my heart, soft as

impress of thy sweet lips, or precious pledge that ever whispers of Urwilde's love."

"Farewell, farewell! already pales the face of night!"

"Oh! linger for but the space of one heart's throb!" "Part not from her, the broken sighing maid whom thou so lovest!" and once more she fiercely clasps him to her breast.

"Oh, Kunno! how I shrinking, dread to meet the gaze of Giselher, who cometh with the creeping light, the dawn of my unutterable anguish; for ne'er before in life possessed I secret thought which now I am forced to keep from him."

"Peace, peace beloved!" "What boots it that I remain with thee, only to cause thy meeting doubly hard to bear? whilst neither could I longer trust myself, restrain the passion's fierce resentment which I must feel, on beholding thine afflicted soul's despair and anguish!"

"Oh Kunno! my love for him is but that

of sister to brother,—and as companion, I could suppressing all, still live with him—endure without a murmur the pangs which torture soul, even unto all eternity, but not as spouse!"

"Oh agony," she moans, and grips his arm till the ruddy oozing drops slowly trickle down his wrist, and at the lonely cry, which piercing, rends his very soul, he shudders fearfully.

"Had I beforehand, fully comprehended matrimony's mystic meaning, never had I joined with him in wedlock; or forced to yield, I either would have killed myself or him!"

"Oh shame! no words can depict its hideousness, or woman's anguish, not endured in love's embrace!"

"Oh fearful agony! humiliating shame and degradation of nuptial's first abhorred, loathsome night—and death came not!"

"Yet how different had it all been with thee, beloved!"

And as she finisheth, with a fierce and stifled cry he springing to his feet, stamps the earth.

"Oh agony! oh loathful nuptial's night!" "Urwilde, Urwilde! noblest maid, despoiled of all thy loveliness!"

"Oh Kunno! what meanest thou?" she cries in turn, leaping to his side.

"Thou canst not hate him for dark crime of ignorance!"

"No, no! far too noble thou art for that, and the very thought of such a fact would kill me!"

"Urwilde! noblest of all Earth's beings! could I but bear all for thee, how light were then life's burden."

"Forgive me Kunno, if thou canst—or reproaching, curse me who hath destroyed for thee all life's happiness!"

"Oh beloved! I beseech thee, forget me and all that hath passed between us; for why shouldst thou, for my sake suffer!"

"Many and beautiful are the women that

still await thee in the world." "Go, seek for thyself some noble companion of thy choice and love, and may she forever make thee happy—" but scarce had ceased her noble utterance, than swift he snatched her to his heart, and ne'er in all life, conceived or dreamt she of the passioned kiss that scorched her lips.

"Oh, were I but worthy of such love and nobility of soul as thine!" "But alas! not divine, but mortal is my being!" "Neither I nor Giselher, nor all that breathes beneath the heavens, is worthy to grovel at thy feet!"

"Thou art the only woman I ever loved, or ever could—and should I as thou say'st, choose another to share with me this life's existence, her lot would wring thy heart with pity—for naught but cold indifference, mere endurance would she gain from me."

"Never would I dare meet thee again, for even as now, all my soul would go out to thee in one rapturous flow of love, and I would hate the very sight of her, bound to

me in sorrow—and couldst thou, knowing that I loved her not, respect me longer?"

"No, Urwilde! ever am I thine, and neither thou nor I, strive as we may, can the other forget!" "'Tis not my suffering, but thine own I feel, and were it not thus, I would still be far less worthy of thee than I already am."

"Think not I fail to comprehend that thy suffering is two-fold mine, but never, never forget Urwilde, that for every pang of anguish thou endureth, my soul suffers a thousand-fold intensified."

"Farewell Urwilde—and until thou forgetting all, canst with me dream away this fleeting life's existence, must we forever part."

"Yet by this hand! which oft repulsing, hath rolled back the battle's surging tide,—will I return at thy longed for summons, and scatter death as autumn winds the dead leaves whirl, amongst all that dare oppose my path to thee!"

"Farewell—farewell, my soul's gleam of life!"

"Urwilde! my sweet bride, farewell!"

"Kunno!" bursteth forth soul's anguished cry—and all disheveled, senseless sunk to earth Urwilde.

XVII.

ILDICO'S VISION.*

Ildico.

"The storm uprooteth the oak, the reed bendeth to the water's edge, and waveth once more in the light."

"The mossy stone marketh the fall of heroes, the crumbling dust thereof, inherit the generations."

"Hark! from afar I catch the echoes faint, which fast increasing, come sweeping o'er the meadows—whilst low as the whispering of the winds, the din of shields ascendeth!"

* For the more perfect explanation of this and Chapter XXIV, the reader is requested to consult the note at the end of the volume.

"Cloud-like floateth before mine eyes' dark vision; ruddy are the falling drops, which speak of the death of the people!"

"Oh time! where springeth thy fount unto light, when ceaseth thy stream to flow?"

"Why longer striveth soul for knowledge lost, in World where man to all else oblivious lusting, satisfieth self alone!"

"High leapeth the lowing flame! the red glare streaketh the broad heavens!"

"Hast fallen, oh Gunther! or doth still the son of 'Gerwart' roll back the hosts!"

"Behold! fresh are the blossoms with which to deck the bride—and yet the heart low throbbeth, not from joy, but faint misgiving!"

"Strange strange, that that which once enrapturing fascination was, no longer my being inciteth!"

"The flow of youth's longings, is but the blossomed spring of infatuation, the soul's recognition, the summer of our love!"

"Two shields* hung in my father's† halls,‡ gold rimmed the one,—pale as the stream the other!"

"Still burn the shields in the mellow light, illumine the dusky halls, but the lone winds sigh in deserted abode, where dwelt my fathers of yore!" "In spirit I sat by the sighing tree,§ where quivereth the leaf in the light, where bursteth the fount 'neath the rustling branch, the voicy stream of the past."

"Hark! what sound sweeps up from the vast abyss! faint glimmers the light on the east!"

"Three spirits‖ arise which first were not, awake from forgotten slumbers!"

"Night, deep night! darkness holdeth the

* The sun and moon.

† The Gods.

‡ The earth.

§ "World-Ash," Yggdrasils—Tree of Existence.

‖ The fates.

watch of space, reigneth o'er Earth's expanse!"

Nornas.

"Oh World of light which once we knew, lifteth at last thy gloom!"

"Heigh sisters! awake, awake! once more sheddeth dawn her rays from afar!"

"Again we weave at the severed threads, the shreds of golden cord—and sing to the sound of the gliding stream, the murmuring stream of the living."

"Behold! how noddeth the slumbering* one!" "Vision disturbeth the passing dream!"

"Hasten the work, ere the nodder awakes! swift glide the hands o'er the shining cord!" "Heigh sisters! short is the space—hasten the toilsome task, ere she of the living awakes!"

Erda.

"Make fast the cord as once of yore, ere

* "Erda"—Spirit of Nature.

parted the gleaming skeins," breatheth she of the voicy tresses.

"I first was not, yet ever was; as 'Nature' my being is known!"

"All conscious living was nurtured of me —breathed into being Earth's life's existence!"

"Not man, but woman* was first of the race, gave life to the line of Earth's dwellers." "From lap of Earth, when in fiercest throes she writhed, I sprang,—to Earth again return!"

"In the dream of the unknown, eternal sleep, I sink from whence I came!" "The Earth have I traced through all her expanse, pierced the gloom of her secret workings."

"All, all of Earth's knowledge, though only of Earth, hath my spirit divined—her birth, course, and fate that awaits her."

"In the beam of the 'shadowy shield'† I lay, and yearned nor knew my longing!"

* Origin of the species—DARWIN.

† The moon.

"From the blissful heights, a stranger* swept through the mellow land." "Lingering he gazed on unknown Earth—wandered long and alone o'er its face—followed the blossomed path which led on before, till he paused in the rock of my broken rest."

"Nine nights he lay in the close embrace, ere rose on the dawn of the last!" "Then first I felt that I was not all—knew Earth's knowledge beyond Earth to be vain."

"'Urda, Verdande and Skulda,'† past, present and future, emotions my being once swayed, sway, and ever and anon unanswered longings within me prompt!" "Oh measureless time! since then how long I have slept, memory refuses account!"

Ildico.

"Oh, far sighted vision, thou spirit of 'Uthe,' mother in me,—rend aside dark mystery's veil!"

* Wotan.

† Nornas, or Fates—offspring of Erda and Wotan.

Erda.

"Once again 'Wotan' swung in his charger's* mane, and swept to the regions of 'Hel,' the realms of shades,—to the mount of the 'Wala,' the slumbering witch."

"Low he chanteth the magic words, and northwards gazing, swingeth the runic-wand, till the 'Wala' awakes from unbroken dreams, evil predicting!"

Wotan.

"Pale have we grown, whilst ever increasing, deepens the twilight!" "How Wala, oh Erda, all knowing woman o'ercometh the God his care!"

Erda.

"Thou art not what thou imaginest thyself to be!" "God thou wert, and God art still, yet no longer holdest thou sole sway on Earth!"

"Once there was naught but abyss and space, for I in thee, still retain the lingering

* "Sleipnir," the best of all steeds.

gleams of first knowledge, thy spirit lent my being."

"Thou willed, and from a chaos swept arrayed the universe, of thine unknown being all suffused!"

"Well traced thou the runes on thy eternal staff, breathed the magic symbols of knowledge and past, known alone to thee, upon the ashen shaft of thy spear."

"Like thine eternal sway, thy invincible will though attained—thou oh Wotan! father of Gods, and source of all living, hast, though triumphant, runed amiss!"

"What thou art, and whence thy source, thou canst not sensibly impart to me,—for all incomprehensible except to thine own self, thou ever wert!"

"Though living, yet unconscious of self, I 'Erda,' 'Spirit of Nature,' drooped in dreams eternal, till thine incantation arrested the stream of my slumbers."

"Of necessity pressed, we wrought our pain,—and my yearning in shape of being

his, 'Brünnhilde,' the 'wish-maid,' sprung into light!" "Gone are the Gods where once they dwelt, resigned the sway which once they held,—too great through thee the might, hath man attained!"

"Ha ha! sleep, deep sleep! gaze on thine end—the 'Dusk of the Gods' is nigh!"

Wotan.

"Away with thee 'Wala, Erda' wan witch! thou art not what thou thinkest thyself to be!"

"At last wills 'All-Father,' that thy drooping lids sink in eternal sleep!"

"Oh ravishing winsome, soul-swaying maid—'All-Father' calls, advance Brünnhilde, thou spirit divine! impart to Earth's dweller my final decree!"

Brünnhilde.

"Oh laughing life of Earth's blossomed race—harken unto the words of 'All-Father!'"

"'The Dusk of the Gods' hath 'Wotan'

decreed, 'All-Father' seeks not apart his own will to cross!"

"His spirit in man, now ruleth as God on Earth,—no longer apart can he his own will in him check!" "To man, his heir cherished, hath he resigned the sway on Earth as first was decreed!" "From Wotan's will and Erda's embrace, I sprung!" "The Father's will and mine are one, of 'Erda' received I mine outer resemblance!"

"Harken well to these, my last words! 'All-Father' speaketh through me!"

"On, on I wandered to the ends of Earth—searched the fathomless depths of the living, till time grew mellow as pathless space, nor peace and calm did I find." "Where buddeth life, I questioned the living, received but one answer from all in return."

"Neither gold nor ambition, nor apart from self, a belief in the Gods,—neither World's vain glory, nor the hardest of rites, neither treacherous customs, nor hearth and land, can give to Earth's dweller the peace

for which he untiringly seeketh in vain; nothing but love can procure the long-sought rest—felicitous in sorrow and joy, love alone permitteth."

"Farewell to World's knowledge, vainest of boasts, forever with me art thou buried in past!"

Ildico.

"Oh vision fast fleeting! deceptive thine image already dispelled!" "All, all, will I know, discloser of time!" "Once more have hope's longings vanished from sight!"

Slowly awaketh the maid from dreams of the unknown—Ildico, "the dark," who dwelleth on life and her sorrow.

XVIII.

Gloom o'ercast the tall chief's brow, as he silent leant upon the battered shield, whilst to the winds flutter his dark locks.

"And will ne'er within the Earth's expanse

cease the strife of nations, and man at last forever sheath the naked blade?" muttereth Giselher.

Up swept the fierce din of battle's tide and surge of hosts, whilst high above the dark moving masses, the shriek of agonized despair and desperation rang o'er the plains, and wailed amongst the distant hills, where the lone vale catcheth the dying echo.

Ceaseless writhe the struggling hosts, in strife of nameless, never ending turmoil, which advancing overwhelmed, again recede, and rolling up once more, fill to very brink, destruction's dark abyss, swelled to overflow of death.

"So was it when unto man, light first gave being—and through the age of long forgotten time, from out the mouldering dust and crumbling ash of empire, hath empire sprung to but sink again beneath the advancing tide of humanity's dark ravage."

And with a shout, he starting up, fiercely shakes the deep dyed lance aloft, and scarce

have ceased the words upon his lips, than down the slopes with muffled roll of rushing feet and clanging steel, like distant roar of tempest's blast, swiftly sweep the banded warriors, darkly filing to the strife of nations —and round about increasing, ringeth hoarse resound of battle, till the surge of death seems licking at his very feet—yet dark and motionless he stands. And in the lull which scarce ensueth, bursting from the maddened press of hurrying hosts, "Duna's chief," renowned in battle, staggers forth. Gone are the shield and helm of dark wings, and all disheveled hangs the hair about his neck, yet still he tightly grasps the hilt of broken blade, whilst dark oozes the blood from beneath his corselets.

"Kunno!" crieth Giselher, and bounding forward, catcheth the falling chief.

"Aye, aye Giselher, truest, noblest of all friends—fate hath guided to thine arms my faltering steps, ere forever fadeth from this sight, the light of earthly vision,"

"Death! dark death! fearful is the strife!" and wild is his sweeping gaze.

"Behold life's surging tumult! and hear'st not the last long drawn groan of expiring humanity, heaped upon the plains!" "Damp are the gored fields, and ruddy swell the rushing waters!"

"Calm, calm thy heated brow, Kunno, beloved friend"—and soft within his arms, the great chief sinks to earth.

"Away, away! why lingerest thou! bear down the foe, that yet from out the land, ye may scourge the curse!"

"Peace, peace! I leave thee not."

"Away! I say—and stem the tide which threatens to engulf the land! yet stay! stay till thou hast heard the parting words of him who ever loved thee."

"Harken Giselher—not until thou hast gathered from my lips the message of this last farewell, dare I yield to Death." "Greet from me the spouse Urwilde, noblest woman, when cold hath grown this hand," and

struggling 'neath the hard caught breath, slightly rose the chief.

"Harken, Giselher, nor forget the words I scarce longer can repeat."

"Fair is Urwilde, yet nobler far, than here all Earth's loveliness."

"Behold!" and with outstretched arm he pointing saith,—"how fond the sunbeams clasp yon solitary blossom which waveth in its slender grace—yet strong as seem the shadowy arms, gentle is their touch, and ne'er unbidden, seek they to enfold the bud, until of self, inflamed of accents, whisperings low and sweet, and soothed beneath their soft caress, it layeth bare the trembling bosom, wreathed in smiles of sweet forgetfulness."

"Like the blossom's frail and scented being, so is the nature of woman, and only when within her bosom, the delicate vein of sentiment is touched, doth her whole being go out to him, the object of her love."

"'Tis through sentiment alone, that remot-

est soul's recess can be approached, and beings solve the secret mystery lurking there."

"Beneath the spell which unconscious souls communion silent hold, is felt, though not wholly comprehended emotional existence's unuttered end and meaning, spirit of nature."

And from the lips of Giselher escapes a groan, for sore it rends his heart to listen to the dying words of him he loves so well.

"Farewell,—Giselher—fast ebbeth the tide of life—yet believe,—believe—and seeking to attain, strive for that which thou hast heard."

"Farewell,—farewell—dim hath all vision grown," breatheth the sinking chief.

* * * *

"Awake, awake! oh joyous beam! that dawnlike breaketh on this World—he still liveth, he breatheth"—burst from Drutwin, as on the knee, he fondly clasps the head, and bending o'er the pallid countenance,

beholds the eyes of Kunno slowly open,—while faintly playeth the smile about his lips. "How laugh the scented meadows, Drutwin."

"Aye aye! and soon again will greet my lord, the halls of Duna!"

"How fareth the battle, Drutwin?" low he breathes.

"Peace, peace—my dear beloved liege,—all, all is well."

"Long since hath ceased the scream of hawks!"

"'Tis well, 'tis well," he softly sigheth once again.

"Few, yet mighty are the chiefs that withstood, o'ercame the tide of death; whilst great and never ending is renown of all who fought and cleft the shields with naked blade, on the broad expanse of Catalaunia's*

* In 451 A. D., occurred the famous battle of Catalaunia, or "battle of the nations," upon the Catalaunian Plains, near "Chalons sur Marne." The Christian, Roman and Germanic races, contended with the Hunic-barbic, deciding whether or not western civilization should yield to the supremacy of Christian-Germanic

plains"—and round about, the shout of gathered warriors echoes 'neath the heavens, for Kunno, 'Chief of the Dark Shield' liveth!"

XIX.

"Who art thou, stranger!" "Far hast thou wandered that fainting, thou sinkest here within the halls."

"The shell!" "Behold how eagerly quaff the feeble lips, the potion's mixture, which sendeth again the stream of life back to the fainting heart!"

"Whence comest thou, oh wandered!" "Thy name—Ildico, daughter of Gundekar, demandeth."

culture, or to that of Hunic barbarism. Three hundred thousand fallen warriors are supposed to have decked the plains, while it is said—that the spirits of the dead, hovering over the fields, wrestled together for three days after the battle.

"The hall of Gibich! abode of 'Gundekar;' thou sayest!" "At last, at last!" "Rest, rest—vision faileth with parting strength."

"Speak, speak! oh daughter of the stranger." "What mission hath led thee hither from out the distant land?"

"Naïta my name—from the land of warriors, the seat of Etzel, mighty in arms, I come."

"Thou comest from Etzel, the dark, the 'king of men!'"

"Alas! woe is me! great is distress and wailing of my people!" "No longer is Etzel, chief of men!" "Shattered are the hosts that met the death on Catalaunia's plains!"

"What sayest thou!" "Etzel, 'subduer of kingdoms,' conquered?"

"Not conquered, but repulsed, he hasteneth from the land, but to return once more and subjugate the nations."

"Far and wide the din of battle echoed, whilst broad hovered the dust-cloud o'er the

wheeling wings, where the dim lance and broken shield half glittered."

"In vain I sought where death held sway, and fiercest surged the hosts in battle, but found him not—the chief of my joy and sorrow!"

"Oh, thou of the dusky tresses! lovely as the moon when the winds half sigh, and she sinketh to rest 'mongst the parted cloud—hath felt thy soul unuttered pang of sorrow which rendeth the heart, long since ceased its bleeding?"

"Here dwelleth he, who despoiled me of the first and only joy my life contained." "Like the orb of the new born day he moveth in his strength!" "Gunther, the son of 'Gerwart,' is known to the halls of Gibich!"

"Upon his gaze I hung, he on my lips, but broke the vow he fondly gave,—left the broken maid!"

"Oh woe, unutterable anguish!" "Lonely was the wailing of the babe that perished in the distant forest's gloomy depths!"

"Why tremblest thou, oh daughter of the king?" "Pale death is seated on thy brow!"

Low moaneth Ildico, and stifled is the cry which bursteth from the quivering lips, as dark she lowereth o'er the stranger.

"Here, here the ring!" and fierce she wrenched the glittering band from off the feeble hand.

"Ha ha! from thee, oh soul of sorrow—betrayed and broken hearted—I reclaim the token of my love which I once gave!"

"Hark! didst hear the horn's faint note?" "'Tis his! full well I know the sound which once caused the heart to leap with joy!"

A shadow falleth across the hall.

"Ildico!" escapeth the lips of Gunther, as with outstretched arms, he cometh in his steel.

"Oh thou of the race of Gerwart! bright are the curling locks which crown the brow of deception!"

"Dost recognize again the ring which thou

once lost in battle?" "Ha ha! behold the victim of thy jest!"

"Ildico! what meanest thou? the woman I ne'er before beheld!"

"Peace! withhold thy words, oh Gunther! thou of the heart of shame and dishonor!"

"Ildico,—"

"Begone!" bursteth from the pallid maid, and as he silent slunk away, conscience vainly sought to flee abhorrent being, which had hateful grown.

Dark and silent stood the daughter of the king—then like the troubled face of the waters, her nature revolteth 'neath the flood of rage which swept her soul—and fierce she breathes in passion.

"Oh age! a curse on thee! who robbeth youth of soul's unsullied longing!" "Like the stream of thy years which ever darker groweth, vanisheth each ray of light, with which hope's blossomed fancy sought to clothe the yet unknown World!"

"Oh honor! birth of innocence! hath

ceased to exist 'mongst men?" "Ne'er dreamt the maid of World's dark crime, but now disclosed."

"Oh man! how darest thou lusting, raise thy vicious gaze to that of pure unsullied woman's!"

"Is't possible, that men thus freely fornicate, and still demand in matrimony the lillied hand of virgin?" and as she silent leaves the halls, Ildico hummeth as she goes.

XX.

"Oh endless night!" "Will ne'er dispel existence' ever deepening shades, which thickening, shroud in gloom impenetrable, the erring faltering soul?" "Forlorn, alone I groping, vainly seek to retrace the lost, obliterated path 'long which I glided, impelled of being's impulse—all unconscious save to nature's longings and emotions sprung of

innocence, to that once former, no longer remembered, cold forgotten existence before I met thee."

"Ah Kunno! cruel and bitter is the fate that beckoning, led us to the realms of earthly bliss, where World oblivious, save to sacrifice of self—through our united beings' union, we first learned to comprehend that greater love for all mankind."

"Oh agony! how hard is now to bear this life's existence, worse than death! the doom of separation, expelled from that once felicitous state we together found—and of soul's knowledge conscious of the common instinct nature lent our beings, sought to solve through mind's creations life's mystery—cheating death of due it ever claims, ere time's allotted Earth's existence ceases."

"Why unbidden, felt and recognized our beings, knowledge of that greater, higher, hitherto unknown love which ennobling, soul inspireth?"

"If false, then debasing is acceptance, conscience of all truth!"

"To Giselher I am the same I ever was, or e'er can be—my nature hath not changed."

"In vain I ever seek in penitence and endless soul self sacrifice, to atone for this weak nature's failings—yet strive and struggle as I may to crush soul's endless longings, forget the crime which World would accuse me of, and force to bear its stain, my conscience revolts against, refuses to accept as fault—for too sacred is being's noblest emotion, love."

"Ah! were Giselher other than noblest being, or I but knew that he could bear the blow and still live out this natural life's existence, what cared I then?"

"What right hath being his or mine, the one upon the other? and is not man, World unmolesting, free to act as instinct guideth?"

"Oh nameless pangs of indecision's torture!" "I neither can remain nor fly." "Renouncing all, the joys of heaven where once we lingered, and endure forever, were

but light, could thy beloved soul's suffering be forgot—and deep dyed shame of blushing virtue disperse, which ever spurred of duty and sense of higher honor, crieth for release."

"Scarce hath ever being expired of love—yet stifling soul's noblest emotion, in time must cease the flow of being's all suffusing fount, whilst but of ever waning passion fanned, life's flickering flame, must slowly cease to be felt, the influence of being's better parts and impulse which it is capable of lending."

"What other bond of being's union is there but love?" "Oh! vainest, falsest of World's delusions, and fearful curse of Earth—that man should so misguide, deceive the mind, imagining offspring's propagation, chief end and aim of wedlock."

"Only deepest soul felt emotion, known as love, all else is but affection, sanctifies the most sacred of all bonds—and every child sprung not of love alone, but adds to the

burthen of this now already greatest of all earthly misfortunes."

"When and how arose such belief which, depriving existence of brightest joy, leaves but a World of denial instead?"

"Remorse for what hath passed I cannot feel, except for Kunno, thy great loneliness—for although lost, 'twas worth alone the living to have felt and learned the one great joy of life."

"Endure, forever must I then endure?" and loud groaneth Urwilde in agony of heart.

"Arise Urwilde, gentlest fairest mistress!" "Why trace thy brow dark shades of gloom?"

"Oh hush! my faithful true Gudrune." "Know'st not, that only when the heart laughs, is arrayed the World in brightest floods of light?"

"But come I pray—and resting by my side, softly sing to me of fair Burgundeland, and relate of the deeds of its people."

XXI.

"Oh fate! how bitterly cruel are thy decrees!" "Not man, but immortals are able to cope with thee."

"Why sighest thou father, Burgunde's king?" "Vain is lament of the powerless."

"Peace, Ildico!" "Where the hosts of eagle crests that swarmed at my call?"

"Scattered they rest in the narrow abode, banished thither by the hand of oppression."

"Gone, vanished is the strength and power of Gundekar, Burgunde's proud and haughty king, who ne'er bent knee to foe before!"

"The subjugation and destruction of the people have we borne, but not content, he demandeth still thy hand!"

"All, all I can endure, yet better that the remnant of the people perish, than thou submit to humiliation worse than death!"

"Peace, my Father!"

"Scattered are hope's blossoms!" "The end is nigh, decreed of unrelenting fate!"

"What further hath the soul to do, long since ceased its longing, in this so joyless World?"

"Ildico! what wouldst thou?"

"Never ending is undying fame of the race of Gibich, known to all times."

"Ne'er yet hath bowed the proud head in supplication—the heroed race as thou wouldst now."

"Better unrelenting, meet the death awaiting us, that the far famed race and name of Ildico, may unstained, go down to future generations."

"Vain are thy reproaches, Gundekar!" "Withhold the bitter words which wound the heart of her who loveth thee!"

"Night separateth the dawn of his approach." "The mighty 'Etzel,' who cometh in his strength to claim the hand of Ildico—the maid, who of all women was worthy found, to share with him the throne of men."

"And neither shall the name of Ildico be unknown to the generations!" "Like the field, torn and devastated by the sweeping tempest's blast, is destruction of my people."

"Ha ha! at last in hand of Ildico, lieth the power to mete the judgment unto him which he so freely passeth upon his fellow men!"

"Heigho! ye vassals to the king!" "Let sound the horn, until the answering echoes summon back again the chiefs that gathered round the throne of Gibich!"

"Proclaim aloud, that all the World may hear, and silent gaze in wonderment upon the mighty pageants of the coming festival!"

"Why weep ye, virgins of Burgundeland?" "Away with tears! and let instead the joyous smile wreathe the countenance!"

"Know ye not, that Ildico, daughter of the king, doth wed in turn a king? and great as ne'er before shall be the fame of Gibich's race!"

"No jeweléd crown shall glitter on my brow, but let the lily-blossom, plucked where

the silent waters linger darkest, wreath my temples—whilst amongst my tresses, bind the stray myrtle branch—for so it was my mother 'Uthe' knelt, who laughed in love for the child she bore!"

"Oh thou that slumberest! not unheard were thy lonely words when last thou camest!"

"Soon again shall greet in spirit this life, the former life which I once knew in thee!"

"When first my being to light awoke, how leapt the heart with joy, as I laughing sought to enfold with outstretched arms, the once bright unknown World!"

"Too long hath lingered here on Earth this being mine, but longeth to depart from out the 'Wish-realms' of yearning—forever vanish on the state of boundless being."

XXII.

"How lone and melancholy is thy voice, oh harp!" "And thou, oh star of love, that far off gleameth on the night, full oft have I thy first rays greeted, and lingering, watched thy sinking course; yet ne'er in all life's wanderings wide, hath longing yearned as now the soul, to wing its flight to thy fair realms, realms of peace and sweet oblivion."

"From out the past dim visions rise, and ever swifter sweeping up, crowd in upon the sighing soul, and stifle pulse of throbbing heart, rent of anguished yearning."

"Lone and silent are 'Duna's Halls' where once love laughed its fiercest—where dwelt 'Krimhild,' the mother and bride, the flame of whose being still leaps in my soul!"

"All darkling and starréd as night, shone the gleam of her loveliness!"

"Oh, why sunk I not on the battle swept plains! breathed out my last 'neath delusion's persuasion, that vain is all life and leadeth to naught—than living have learned, that life hath a joy, which ne'er beyond death, in unknown realms, creative souls' longings, can be surpassed!" "Have solved life's mystery through far sighted vision, and sighing catch the faint echoes of nature's low murmurings, which whisper of being's new born existence!"

"Yet helpless, powerless to act I linger still here!" "Enough have our beings already communed, and of soul's emotion drunk long and deep!"

"No more of life's knowledge dare I impart to Urwilde, lest her chaste being influencing for worse, and acting on impulse, she should live to regret too precipitous haste, succumb to remorse, darker than death—she, she alone must decide."

"All all, can each bear, and though loneli-

ness chilleth the heart, still bright are Earth's joys."

"Duty impels us to act thus alone, disclosing to gaze of erring mankind, the far off gleam of eternity's rays, which lead to the life of Earth's future existence."

"All comprehending and conscious of truth, act not we thus—then to World self and nature's instinct, have we become false—and deep dyed shame of hypocrisy is but our lot."

"Though soul's one great longing be attained in the end, no selfish motive prompts us thus; 'tis conscience which forceth being to claim its most sacred right, commanding respect of both self and World."

"Ah woe is me! a curse upon this being mine!" "I, who fast expiring, thought soon to bid this World farewell, disclosed perchance to Giselher, the secret of our love!"

"What said I?" "No longer can memory recall the wandering words which, on that day I uttered."

"'Twas all, all for her sake, that he might seek to better comprehend her being when I was gone; that in her, he hath gained World's greatest treasure, and that ambition's course leadeth but to naught."

"Yet, what boots it?" "Strive as he may, never could he, whose nature is so different, lacking tenderest sentiment's emotion, possess her inmost soul, cause her secret conscience to unburden." "Only beings of like nature, each the other comprehend."

"Should he suspecting, guess our love, behold and comprehend at last her soul's great longing and agony of heart, yet still refuse to give her free—then is he no longer the noble being that I thought him, and casting aside all further restraint, to me were clear the course I then should take—hasten to Urwilde, demand of him through hateful force or mild persuasion, the rights our beings claim."

"Ah Giselher! most cherished friend—never canst thou comprehend the anguish of

the soul,—how rends my heart the thought of depriving thee of her, of that which thou lovest more than life."

"No selfish, covetous longing which we for one another cherish, forces us to act, but conscience of highest duty and honor, sprung of love of innocence, when life without respect for self is worse than death, becomes unbearable."

"No no! if I mistake me not, far too noble is thy being that, understanding her distress, thou shouldst refuse to give her up, though with the sacrifice thou shouldst relinquish life's last ray of joy and hope."

"Comprehending all, consent thou must—or thy lot and suffering is not worthy of a thought, for 'twere but motive sprung of selfishness which otherwise must prompt thee."

"Light giveth free and equal being unto man—'tis but unequal lot of this World's circumstances which his nature subduing, forceth him to accept his unnatural fate."

"Neither word nor utterance can clothe, depict such hideous being's selfishness as his, who but to satisfy his own soul's self longing, demandeth as sacrifice, another's life."

"This is the depth of all selfishness, and of greater, no human being is capable."

"Free is man's being to act as it chooses, and upon other than self, possesses no right—for if otherwise, it must but lead to the death of the race."

Silent and musing, Kunno lingereth a space, ere paleth the dawn on the low waning heavens.

XXIII.

The awe of silence, so like uncertainty's dark gloom, hung o'er the gathered chiefs.

Unfaltering is the conqueror's measured step, and as he slowly passeth through the throng—"Etzel, Etzel! king of men!" ringeth out in answer to the clanging shield.

"At last, oh Ildico! daughter of Gundekar, Burgunde's liege, I come to beg the favor of thy grace, and which ne'er before hath Etzel asked of woman—Etzel, who is ever wont to command, not beseech."

"Too great, my liege, is this the favor Ildico the maid, hath found in eyes of mighty Etzel."

"Too lavishingly hath fortune dealt with Burgunde's maid, one so far beneath thee, that she should behold the first of heroes sink in adoration at her feet—him, whose very nod is life or death to the people,—saith who shall live or perish."

"Strange, strange! that one so great in arms should reckon naught renown and all ambition, and find at last the rest and goal of life he sought, at woman's side."

"Oh! thou of the unbending spirit!" "I who make, undue the races of the mighty peoples—I who through renown and heroed might, my Fathers lent my being, checking, hold the sway on Earth, and shape the des-

tiny of man—I who with unshrinking hand, have rent the veil from off the darkest motive, the human bosom nurtureth,—have quaffed to overflowing the shell of life's bitterness, and exulting crushed and triumphed o'er man's worst enemy, man!—ha ha!—toss the bauble diadem which glitters on my brow, here at thy feet—for only through the soul's recognition in sole communion with that of woman, can the destiny of man o'erstep the bound, this World's limited existence hath set it!"

"Let sound the voice of music, till the soul sick being pineth for release in death, from ecstasy's transports."

"Your queen, oh chiefs! may the voice of warriors echo to the very Heavens, nor let the sounding shield be silent!"

"Behold the maid, your queen! the son of 'Mundzuck' leadeth to grace the throne of heroes!"

"Farewell abode of yearning youth's cher-

ished longings, where fancy pictured World as nature willed, not as man hath made it!"

"Hail to thee, oh distant land! Earth's destiny of my wishes,—and let again the full toned voice of music sweep my passioned soul free of longing!"

"Farewell, ye halls of my Fathers, where dwelt the race of heroes! no more shall the gaze of Ildico rest upon you in the fondness of her soul!"

"The bearded thistle rustles 'mongst the withered grass upon the hills!" "In after-times, the passing stranger shalt rest amongst thy mossy broken pillars, nor shall the spirit of Ildico be absent from thy shades—but when the wan light floodeth o'er the waters, shall my lone ghost sigh through the night winds."

XXIV.

"URWILDE'S DREAM."*

On on, they press through the stilly night. "Beloved! how faint is the throb of thy tremulous heart," and as he clasps her unto his breast, the flood of her rapturous gaze met him, which spake of the peace of her being.

Thine, all thine—was all that she asked. "For thee beloved, I have given up all."

Speechless he bends o'er the pallid brow, gazes into those fathomless depths, beholds life's mystery and secret of love, in nature of woman, its only abode. For the man she loves, woman willingly sacrifices all—her country, kinsmen and belief, and lastly her honor in the eyes of the World, which last however, she but first regains in fearlessly

* See note at the end of volume.

facing cruel frown of the World—and of greater sacrifice, no being is capable.

Subdued and low as the sighing winds, murmur the gliding waters, and faint is the ring of the echoing hoof on the silence of night as they flee—whilst pale stream the moonbeams o'er the bossed shield, which circling hangs at his shoulder.

Silently she raises her parting lips, and low and deep breathes the soul of Urwilde.

"At last, at last! my former being's self cast off, thou claspest the maid of thy heart—her being a part of thine own." "The maid who once blushed, and shrinking, timidly traced on the face of dim visioned fancy, the dream of her blossomed love, ere pang of World's anguish was felt in the bosom." "At last and forever, Urwilde is thine!" "How sweet, beloved, is touch of thy lips, and soft is the clasp of thine arms!" "Harken Kunno, and thou shalt hear of the vision's import which gave me to thee—revealed the whole of life's knowledge."

"Darkling hung o'er Earth the night, dim and starréd as twilight, as soft I lay upon the robed couch, palely flooded of stealing moonbeam." "Alone I lay—how long, I scarce can tell." "Silence held my very breathing, and yet I neither knew nor felt the loneliness of solitude."

"At length slow fading vision ceased, whilst never ending gloom lay on my ebbing being, until at last a strain arose, which ne'er I heard, and yet I recognized."

"Low and melancholy was its voice, and as I listened to the plaintive notes, a flood of unutterable anguish swept o'er my soul, yet how strange! great was the peace and calm of my being,—and as a groan escaped my lips, I felt a touch which seemed to send again through me, the thrill of life of my departed being's spirit, and I awoke—yet knew it not, so wondrous was the world I gazed upon."

"Still gently held in clasp the hand, whose touch first breathed back again in me, the

life of my departed being—and as I slowly raised mine eyes, how strange! methought it was my very self which bending o'er me I beheld; so like reflected image which oft in former times, 'neath tangled forest's glades, smiled back at me from out the darkest pools."

"Long and silent hung o'er me the drooping head, as speechless still I sought to summon back again to light of memory, recollection of the strange unknown being which instinct told me once I must have seen, and which I recognized again,—and as I gazed, wondrous was the beauty of her countenance, whilst ruddy shone the sheen of her golden tresses."

"At last, faint wreathed the smiles her parting lips, and low she spake:"

"'Urwilde,' low she breathed, oh sweet, were the accents of her voice!"

"'Again in thee do I behold mine outer being's self—the semblance of her, the 'Wala

Erda,' who first gave life to thee, unto our race."

"'Urwilde, cherished maid! thou who through age of dim, forgotten time, first of all our race since me was worthy found to bear the name—the name 'Erda' bore, and I in her, and still possess, nor can impart to thee that which now thou canst not comprehend, yet once shalt know—its mystic meaning, and whence it sprung." "Long have I tarried in fulfillment of the task allotted me, and silent held the watch of past which ever was and is." "At length the paling dawn which far off streaked the heavens, though dimmed again, aroused once more to consciousness my silent slumbering being, and lo! before my vision arose the image of thy mother, 'Walaruna,' in whom I thought to find release—return once more to my former first existence, to the life that but forgetteth."

"'Great was longing's tumultuous surge, which swept my being—yet alas! too soon had faintly shed the far off gleam its flicker-

ing light upon the appointed time for which I waited, and knew was nigh—for not to her, but thee, was given power to break, dispel the magic's charm, which ever held my being bound." "Thee thee, at last I greet! Urwilde, child of light!" "In me beholdest thou thy being's first World awakening, all thou wouldst and e'er can be'—and as she ceased, I silent lay and vainly sought to fathom the mystery's meaning, yet comprehended not her utterance."

"O'erhead half hung the sail, scarce heaved to the low wind's breath, and on the bark which no hand guided, slowly we glided with the stream whose shaded waters lapping, lingered 'mongst the pale green sedge that waved along the banks, where the blossom blushed on the fens." "And as we slowly drifted onwards, away swept the plainéd landscape to the dim hills, where the heavens hung low, whilst broad and open were the halls, close to the water's edge."

"Dark hung the shields of the many

crested warriors, whilst wondrous was the disheveled loveliness of woman, such as ne'er I yet beheld." "Again low silence broke 'Urwilde,' she whom I ne'er before beheld, yet ever knew—and 'twas as though my very being spake :"

"'Oh past!' breathed the 'golden tressed.'" "'Mellow was the time where once I dwelt!" "Neither knew I nor conscious was of World's awakening—birth of light alone, and which again from out the World's dark gloom, must dawn on Earth!"

"'Wish-child, Brünnhilde' I am, of him that was and is, 'All-Father,' first sprung of light." "I, who e'en divined in him unuttered passing thought's purport, whilst low communed our beings."

"'At length I crossed the wish of him, which he forbade, yet longed for, as I beheld approaching hour of this Earth's direst need, for 'Erda' helpless slumbered,—and 'neath the flooding gaze of yet unknown wrath,

sunk I as 'twere to nothingness, unconscious."

"'The death for which I longed and sought, he me denied." "I, who through love of him, self forgot—the 'Wala,' who through spirit his and Erda's, comprehended, yet ne'er knew nor felt the love of mortal, so long as I 'All-Father's' wished desire divined, and unto me, though he forgave, not maid yet ever woman, was meted doom Earth's dweller cannot comprehend." "Endure the fated clasp, which past forgetting, I so eagerly sought; 'neath which, vanished all was visioned knowledge, when conscious I first awoke to Earth, nor knew my former self!" "Behold the World where once I breathed!" "See'st not, all, all are fair its dwellers!" "Godlike tosseth the head in pride and loftiness, for all are sprung of light and love—of love, when awed, and of adoration overcome, woman of her companion worshiped was!" "She, not he, first sought and asked for the embrace, when free to act

and choose, nature's instinct told her she beheld in him her own reflected being's self; and ne'er till then, except in love's embrace, did she know man."

"Love is free, and only love our beings unite." "Yet not as thou might'st think, countless were the people of such World, but few were the dwellers of wide Earth's expanse, and ne'er through all time could be but few." "For only when divining instinct revealed to her in him, her own heart's throb, and helpless, 'neath soul's intense emotion overcome, did she submit; and ne'er since time began, were more than beings two alike."

"Farewell, Urwilde,—no longer dare I tarry absent from the distant bounds of those unknown realms, from whence I come." "Yet harken well to these, my last, my parting words." "World's anguished cry, humanity's lament hast thou heard—endured thy soul its darkest pangs!"

"Thou canst save, undue the race!" "To thee and him, whose passioned being like

thine, sprung from love's embrace, is given power at last through your united being's strength, to disperse Earth's ever thickening gloom."

"Away, away! at last life's mystery hast thou learned!" "But from your united being's strength, can spring again the heroed race which thou hast seen." "Away, away! nor linger longer!" "To being his, which thou and I in thee, first sought and found at last in World!"

"Unholy is the bond of wedlock, not joined in love."

"Knowing all, no longer canst thou restrain soul's emotioned longing—and should ye refuse to act, all, all is lost, and on your beings forever rests the curse of time! for ye have quenched life's living flame!"

"And as the dying words ceased upon mine ear, soft I felt the pressure of her lips upon my brow."

"From past I came, to past return, and

tarry there to greet in flight thy wandering spirit!"

"Again dark shrouds thickened around my spirit, whilst intense and deeper grew the silence."

"Then swept again the thousand visions before mine eyes, and paled once more with failing memory."

"At length, softly stole again the moonbeam o'er the couch, and ne'er in all existence felt I or knew such calm and peace of being."

"And as I lay, intenser grew the flooding moonlight, whilst far below I beheld the gliding waters of the Rhine, which low voiced, onwards wound amongst the distant hills and waving meads."

"Oh wondrous calm of solitude! soft shone the lights on the heavens."

"Far away in the vale's recess, low rose the sound of chorus-song which, sweeping up from out the valley's depths, passed away on the night." "Yet ere had died the voices

of the past, a strain arose, so like the harp's full throb, and fiercely leapt the joy within my being, as glowing rose the star of love, and hung away on the dawn!"

"Thee beloved, at last I clasped, and lips to lips—yet the intensity of our joy we knew lay far beyond."

"Then did I first comprehend, that woman hath become but the shadowed assimulation of what her nature really is—that not spouse, but mere friend and mistress I had been to Giselher, and deep, deep was the crimson flush of shame! for I myself no longer could respect."

Close she clings about his neck, her white arms entangled 'mongst her heavy tresses.

"Oh, wondrous woman!" half o'ercome at length he breathed—whilst faint she felt him shudder.

"Too great, too great! is this thy sacrifice for one so unworthy, so far beneath thee!" "Canst thou endure the accusations, face false slander the World will heap upon thee?"

"This World, which stifling nature's purest instinct, gloateth, feedeth on hypocrisy?"

"Know'st not that shamefaced World, the open harlot, will trampling, seek to drag thy pure unsullied being down to its foul depths?" "That thou art an outcast, and hast but me alone, left to thee on Earth?"

"Thou art my God!" she fiercely cries, and with the mighty impulse, he feels the hot breath scorch his cheek. "Thee thee, beloved! at last I possess, and ne'er will give thee up again! for as I thee, ever must thou love me, whether thou wilt or not!"

"What care I for World! thou art my soul's one longing for which I sought, and found at last! in thee I clasp all Earth hath to offer!"

"Not for love's sake, forsook I Giselher!" "Love but prompted my being to action—'twas conscience that forced me to set example to the World, which all humanity must either follow, or perish of the death she well deserves!"

"With thee, Kunno my lord, I fearlessly face the World, and should the pain and pangs of unutterable sorrow and blighted hopes wring the heart of Giselher, no fault is it of mine!"

"Full well he knoweth, that Urwilde conscious, ne'er in life proved false to self!" "Forgive he must, or ne'er was his the noble being which I ever thought him—but of yet unknown selfishness, unworthy of the glance of woman's eyes, as all men are, who dare to look upon her with other thought than adoration."

"On on, my lord! to life of endless bliss, in World at last arrayed in floods of light!" "To World, not of denial, but joy and happiness!"

"Seest not beloved, how laughs the lenz of our love! and when our beings from this Earth's realms their farther flight have taken, together, wreathed in smiles of innocence, shall we greet, forever fade as one, upon the boundless sea of being!"

XXV.

The hum of the guests ceaseth—whilst naught but the flickering flame disturbeth the silence which broodeth within the halls.

High ensconsed upon the throne, reclineth the king.

Half 'roused within, he slowly rose, and musing looked upon the goodly hosts.

Once more he turning, slowly sinketh back again, and as his lingering gaze resteth on the queen, he softly sigheth.

"Etzel! King of Kings! the 'Father of his People!' bursteth from the 'sembly's midst, and ere the echoes die away, the answering echo ringeth back—" "The queen! Ildico the Dark! Burgunde's maid —the queen liveth!"

Long and deep hath Etzel drained the horn, in honor of the festive wedding—and

as they rose, the flush gave way to pallor on the brow of Ildico, yet soft she smiled.

"Hear'st not, oh queen! how laud the chiefs the beauty of Gibich's daughter?"

Firmly she grasps the proffered hand, but as he slowly leads her forth, the king half stumbles, and the crown he wore, rolling to the feet of Ildico, she seems to kick, nor heedeth, but passeth on.

"At last, to my soul self I take thee, Ildico—satisfy mad craving of my longings!"

"Alone at last my liege! alone with Ildico, whose hand thou soughtest and won!"

"Ha ha! come come, my liege! no longer withhold the soft caress which thou so fondly lavisheth on woman, for which my soul so thirsteth!"

"Oh thou of the race of Gibich! Burgunde's queen! many are the women 'Mundzuck's' son hath loved, subdued in joy upon the nuptial eve!"

"Fawnlike thou movest in thy slender

loveliness, pale as the lily that noddeth on the plain!"

"Like the faint light when the eve of creeping shadows is young, shineth thy far off gaze, nor gathered are thy tresses!"

"Oh white armed maid! behold, here at thy feet I lay the sceptre!" "But a glance from thine eyes, subdueth the 'king of men!'" "At last, a queen is worthy found to rule with mighty 'Mundzuck's' son, and ne'er again shall he know other woman!"

"Of Etzel thou shalt bear a king, worthy of the throne his father left him!"

"Aye, my liege! the flood of passioned longing swelleth o'er the bound restraint would set!" "Thou shalt rest upon the swell and fall of woman's breast—the breast of woman, nurturer of all humanity!"

"Make haste, my liege! low sinketh the flaming torch!"

"Come beloved! soft and dim is the shadowy couch."

"Softly, softly, ah!"—wild and piercing

is death's cry, whose echo is despair—whilst 'neath the damp and glittering blade, Etzel, son of "Mundzuck," sinketh* in his blood.

Still retained her maiden-hood, the daughter of King Gundekar—yet dark are the feathered arrows that quivered in the breast of Ildico, as lashed to the wild steed, disheveled hung her heavy hair in passing.

Still glide the waters as once of yore! The wind sigheth among the grass, and whispereth of the deeds of the past. Gone are the halls and race of Gibich!

Perished in youth, Burgunde's lone blossom—but not in vain hast thou lived.

The name of Ildico, and fame of the maid, shall not pass unknown to the memory of the bard.

* The death of Attila is shrouded in mystery. He is either thought to have died of a hemorrhage during the wedding night, or to have been assassinated by his supposed wife, Ildico,—thus avenging the destruction of her people, of which he was the cause. Legend also records that, during the nuptial eve, Ildico strangled Attila within the wonderful lengths of her heavy hair.

XXVI.

"Oh death! 'neath soothing touch of whose cold hand, vanisheth Earth's unknown anguish, why lingerest thou?" "In vain, in vain I seek to banish thoughts of her, she whom my being loved, and still loveth as of yore!" "Away, away! unbearable hath existence mine become." "No longer here within the silent halls, where once life's very being moved, findeth the yearning soul repose—where e'en abhorrent, fearful hath faint shadowed self become, and dying echoes seem but the sighings of the departed!"

"Come, come, swift messenger of death! thou whom formerly I sought to shun, or fearing not, set at bold defiance, Giselher now welcometh,"—and at the dying words, faint gleams the blue steel aloft.

"But hold!" hisses the dark browed chief.

"Not yet is ripe the time of allotted Earth's existence mine, until this hand hath snatched the life of him, for whom the boundless love which I once bore, hath changed to nameless hatred and contempt!"

"The life of him, who 'neath stealth and wile, betrayed the friend and ruthless brought upon the spouse World's dark disgrace and shame!" "A curse on thee and thy whole race!"

"Withhold thy curses, Giselher!" "'Tis vain to curse the past for that which thou canst ne'er again regain—or heap thy curses upon this head alone, but not on them it doth not concern!"

"Ah yes, my lord, I have come, as thou knewest I must."

"Fierce were the sons of Duna, the blood of whose race still courseth in my veins! 'Krimhild,' the mother, gave for me her passioned life, whilst 'Tragaboda' fought for woman!"

"And thou art here!" and with a shout,

the great chief starteth up, whilst low leap the flames in his eyes. "At last, at last! face to face we meet the death!"

"Peace, peace! till thou hast heard all that I desire to impart to thee!"

"Again, oh! Giselher, noblest liege, I come to claim the glance of love which ever eager sought to welcome Kunno." "Again the heart which wept for thee, and yearneth ever as of yore, seeketh to enfold the bosom friend."

"This being mine, in thine eyes false, lay bare the slumbering passions of the soul, which not till now thou perceived'st, prove true at last to thee!"

"Reveal to thee World's lasting joy, obtainable through sacrifice of self alone—the giving up each for the other, of all Earth hath here to offer."

"Then, and only then, through inner conscience' instinct, perceiveth, comprehendeth self the soul, and knowing self, first understandeth being's meaning of the love for all mankind."

"The meaning of the anguished wail of all humanity which first was not, yet since dim light of recollected time hath echoed—rang through dark World, since was stifled nature's voiced instinct, first conscious knowledge."

"Our beings met, recognized the long sought self, and soul's tumult was but emotioned longing this, the race hath ever felt."

"Affection's most exalted form, the love we felt, revealed to us the now alas! forgotten fact, that no law but nature's instinct can set bounds to soul's emotion, which free to act, prompteth man to self forgetting." "Though obtained, the long sought end, unasked, unbidden, save to self, was each the other's being's sacrifice."

"Who gave thee right upon her being which thou claimest?"

"Full well thou know'st that beyond the bond of her affection, not thine own, thou possessest none!"

"And when thou knelt before the maid, what asked thou, Giselher?"

"To but forever serve the being whom thou loved, and dwell with thee—not slave become, as thou now wouldst have—her being is as free to act as thine own."

"But why ravest thou, oh noble Giselher? and pallid gloom o'ercast thy brow?"

"The affection and esteem, Urwilde ever bore thee, hath lessened not, and ever must remain the same."

"For me, who comprehendeth her great soul, all emotion's longings, she left thee, who knew her not."

"Wouldst thou have her still remain,—she whom ne'er in all eternity, whose being so different from thine own, thou couldst not understand? demand of her, life's sacrifice, for which thou gavest naught in return?"

"Thou art nothing but the rejected suitor of the maid, whose hand thou hast failed to gain."

"Ah Giselher," and at the words, fierce

was the flood of passion that swept o'er the chief of Duna, and he stamped in rage,—"I have cursed thee for what thou in ignorance committed—forced the maid against her will!"

"Knowest not, that woman only willingly yieldeth to but soul intoxicated love alone?" "How many more anguished moons desirest thou, Urwilde shalt suffer for thy soul-self?"

"Or force her to endure abhorrent shame of concubine, when she can no longer respect herself?"

"Hast not enough?" "Art not convinced at last, that vain and without reason are thy longings, knowing thou canst ne'er gain her whole love?"

"Woman is the loadstar of humanity. Her faith decideth the destinies of the hearth, the community." "She is the salvation or destruction of the race."

"Farewell—too long perhaps thou say'st, I have lingered here in idle jest of words!"

"Farewell again, and where to find me thou knowest well, shouldst unrelenting, seek to satisfy thy thirst for blind revenge; resort to force when hath failed the mind, clear reason's understanding."

"Yet shouldst thou unyielding, refuse to forgive, welcome back Urwilde and the friend,—then by this hand and life, which ne'er have shrunk from death, I will exulting cut thee down without remorse or conscience' pang!" "If thou art a *man*, thou wilt endure."

Thus spake "Kunno of the Dark Shield," and as the footsteps' dying echoes ceased along the halls, deep silence held communion within the soul of Giselher. And unto him he likeneth himself, who eager in blind search of the more precious jewel, hath unconscious all the while, crushed the pearl beneath his feet.

XXVII.

"How slowly glide the shadows in the vale below!"

"Like the dusk of the sighing eve, is calm of my being Kunno."

"Aye, Urwilde! and lovely as the faint glow in the west, is the flush which mantleth o'er thy lily brow—whilst in thine eyes, I behold the wondrous twilight of soul's Earth's joy and peace."

Low she bendeth o'er the chief, and fervent is the pressure of her lips.

"Behold Kunno! how laugheth 'Lenzruna,' the blossom of our love."

"And like thine own, Urwilde, heavy wave her golden tresses."

Earth sinketh to rest—to the unknown dreams of forgotten slumbers yet speechless still they gaze, lost in adoration of soul's silent communion.

"What mound is that Kunno, marked by the mossy stone where the moonbeam streameth pale and soft, and the wind sigheth 'mongst the grass?"

"'Tis the mound of 'Krimhild,' beloved."

"No sighing of the wind thou hearest, but the voice* of her from the past."

"The voice of 'Krimhild,' the mother—the mother, who gave for me her passioned life, whose being ceased in the pangs of her joy."

"Oh thou† that rollest above, in the sea of thy broken cloud, when gone are the halls of Duna, and naught but the wail of the lone wind is heard on the mount,—thou alone canst relate of the past, tell of the deeds of her heroed race, of the sorrow and joy of Urwilde."

* The northern races not only believed the souls of the departed to inherit "Walhalla," but that they also revisited the mounds where they were buried.

† The Moon.

FINIS.

Note to Chapters XVII and XXIV.

Wotan created the earth, and the giants dwelt amongst the mountains, the men upon the plains, the dwarfs within the interior of the Earth, and the Gods upon the cloud-heights.

The dwarf "Alberich," overhearing the song of the "Rhine-daughters," guarding the "Rhine-gold," discovers the secret that, whosoever renounces love can obtain possession of the gold, through the might of which, its possessor will be able to gain the sway on Earth.

Pronouncing the curse, he seizes the gold, out of which he welds the "Nibelungen-Ring." The giants, "Fafner and Fasolt," rear the burg "Walhalla" for the Gods, in return for which, they receive the "Nibelungen-Ring" and countless treasures, wrested from Alberich by Wotan. Before relinquishing the ring however, Alberich pronounces his curse upon it, which must lead to the destruction of whomsoever possesses it. Fafner kills his brother Fasolt, and hoarding the ring and gold in a dismal forest, succumbing the while to greed, finally assumes the form of a dragon.

Fearing lest the giants or dwarfs might wrest from him the sway on Earth, through the magic power of the ring, Wotan seeks to avert the catastrophe through his own might in man.

From the union of Wotan and a mortal, spring "Siegmund and Sieglinde," brother and sister. Separated in earliest childhood, Siegmund, ignorant of his sister, and oppressed by many foes, wanders long and alone o'er the Earth; while "Sieglinde" is later in life forced to espouse "Hunding" against her will. Siegmund finally meets again with Sieglinde, and becoming enamored of one another, they flee, pursued by Hunding. "Frigga," the spouse of Wotan, enraged at him for prompting the union of brother and sister, exacts from him the promise not to shield Siegmund during the ensuing combat with Hunding. Accordingly, Wotan dispatches the Walkyrie, "Brünnhilde" against his will to protect Hunding—for owing to the magic power of the sword "Nothung," given by Wotan to Siegmund, the latter has become invulnerable. Brünnhilde, the child of Wotan and "Erda," and most cherished of Wotan's offspring, divining the real will of Wotan, that Siegmund shall triumph and live, attempts to shield him. Wotan, appearing upon the scene of combat, strikes asunder the sword of Siegmund, who is felled by the blade of Hunding. Hunding in turn, terrified by the sight of Wotan, sinks lifeless to earth.

Brünnhilde meanwhile, rescues Sieglinde and the broken sword of Siegmund. As punishment for her disobedience, Wotan banishes Brünnhilde from the realms of Walhalla, proposing to leave her in a deep sleep upon Earth, a prey to the first mortal that chances to find her. Brünnhilde pleads and begs for death, but in vain.

Relenting somewhat, Wotan decrees that she shall slumber upon a mountain surrounded by fire, accessible only to the greatest of heroes, and who knows not fear.

"Siegfried," the offspring of Siegmund and Sieglinde, is reared in the forests by the dwarf "Mimir."

Welding anew the broken blade of his father's sword "Nothung," he slays the dragon Fafner, gaining possession of the "Nibelungen-Ring" and finally, bursting through the flame upon the summit of the mountain, finds Brünnhilde, whom he awakens with a kiss, and in whose eyes, (woman's) he first learns fear.

Many moons come and go ere Siegfried once more goes forth into the world in quest of adventure.

Through Brünnhilde's magic, the body of Siegfried becomes invulnerable, with the exception of a spot in the middle of his back, for Brünnhilde knows he will never flee the foe. Upon the shore of the Rhine, within the halls of "Gibichung," dwell the brother and sister, "Gunther and Gutrune," and "Hagen," the son of the dwarf Alberich and a woman.

Alberich, appearing to Hagen in a dream, warns him of Siegfried's approach, and admonishes him to gain possession of the "Nibelungen-Ring," in order that he may attain to the supreme sway on Earth.

Hagen notifies Gunther and Gutrune of Siegfried's expected arrival, recounting the many wonders performed by the hero, and also relates of Brünnhilde, the most beautiful of women, who dwells upon the fire-mount, accessible to Siegfried only, the greatest of heroes. He persuades Gutrune to win by strategem the love of Siegfried, through the magic of a "love-potion,"—partaking of which, Siegfried will forget the past and his bride Brünnhilde.

In order to obtain the hand of Gutrune, he will also win for Gunther his own bride, Brünnhilde.

Siegfried arrives, partakes of the love potion, and forgetting the past, inflamed and enamored of the charms of Gutrune, undertakes to procure for Gunther, Brünnhilde as spouse.

Placing upon his head the "Tarnhelm," or magic cap, which he won from the dragon Fafner, he assumes the outer semblance of Gunther, and departing, captures Brünnhilde, with whom he returns in triumph.

The wedding festivities of Siegfried and Gutrune are celebrated. The unhappy Brünnhilde, recognizing in Siegfried her former spouse, plans with Hagen his death.

A hunt is arranged, and the warriors depart. Hagen thrusts with his spear the unwitting Siegfried through the back. Brünnhilde discovers too late the deception which has been practiced upon Siegfried. Springing upon her steed "Grane," she leaps into the pyre and is consumed with the body of Siegfried, by the flames. Hagen attempts to snatch the "Nibelungen-Ring," but the waters of the Rhine rolling up, he is seized by two of the "Rhine-daughters," and pulled beneath the waves. A third Rhine-daughter seizes the ring, thus gaining possession of, and once more reclaiming the long lost gold.

In the "Nibelungen-Ring," we recognize the curse of gold which now rests upon humanity, and the disasters which accompany the greed and thirst for gain.

"Brünnhilde, symbolical of the will of God, is identical with Baldur, the White, or Sun-God of earlier Northern mythology,—'Helios,' or 'Apollo' of the Greeks, 'Horus' of the Egyptians, etc., and the 'God of the South,' or the Christ of more modern civilization."

In the union of Brünnhilde and Siegfried, who hold nothing sacred but their love, defying all laws except the divine, in the name of that almighty passion, we recognize the supreme or culminating psychical development of man, who no longer poses as mortal, but stands forth as God on Earth; the regeneration and redemption of mankind through self, or the divine life of his being.

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